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5 Cents.

WIDE AWAKE

A COMPLETE **WEEKLY** STORY EVERY WEEK.

OUT FOR GOLD;
OR, THE BOY WHO KNEW THE DIFFERENCE. *By TOM DAWSON.*



"Bind the impudent barbarian!" cried Princess Zendra. "Send them both to be slaves in my mines!" Jack fought desperately, but a trip from behind sent him sprawling, and the first assailant piled upon him. That dream of wealth vanished!

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OUT FOR GOLD

OR,

The Boy Who Knew the Difference

By **TOM DAWSON**

CHAPTER I.

THE BLEAK LAND OF PROMISE.

"Shall we try it now, Jack?"

Hartley took a long, intent look at the frowning, rock-bound, desolate coast.

It was in the tropical seas, about thirty degrees south latitude and somewhere near thirty west longitude.

Yet the big island at which both boys peered, and which was some three miles distant, showed few signs of vegetation.

There was little hope of being able to sustain life long on that island.

"It seems a toss-up," Jack Hartley responded, dispiritedly.

"But this old bark will pound to pieces on this ledge."

"And we're hundreds of miles from Rio Grande di Sul, the nearest province in Brazil."

"Can we ever take a small boat in through all those reefs?"

Neither of the boys left alone on this shattered, doomed old bark, the Benjamin W. Allen, could see anything very rosy in the picture, no matter from what side it was viewed.

"The sea is still running pretty roughly," muttered Jack.

"Shall we stay on the bark, then? How much longer will it hold together, anyway?"

"At the rate she's pounding on the reef under us, she'll go to pieces any second."

"Oh, dear!" moaned Bob Brewster. "If ever I get out of this, and go to sea again, I don't believe it'll be under a drunken skipper with a drunken crew."

"It isn't the time to talk about the way we'll ship next time," smiled Hartley, drearily. "The only conundrum for us now is whether we can reach the shore alive."

"Then you think it's best to make the try?"

"It's the only thing we can do," Jack vented, anxiously.

"Then we'll try?"

"Sure thing."

"How soon?"

"Why," Jack answered, looking at his ship's mate, "we might as well risk ourselves now, in a sound small boat, as to stay on a wrecked, broken-up bark that's pounding and grinding itself to pieces on the rocks."

As Jack spoke he looked around at the few preparations they had been able to make.

There was a cask of ship's water, a case of tinned bacon, some hard tack and pilot bread, and a few other food supplies, all in their wooden packing cases.

There, too, were a pair of rifles, rummaged up from the cabin of the late captain.

For Captain Bostwick was no more.

These two boys, despised members of the bark's late company, had seen the captain, the two mates, the cook and the crew of nine men go down before their eyes the night before.

And that without being able to move a hand in behalf of the perishing mates.

Captain John Bostwick, of this now destroyed bark, was a hard-drinking skipper.

Unable to get any ship worth the while, he had de-

scended to the command of this weather-beaten bark, the Allen.

His mates and the crew as bad as himself, the bark had had a hazardous voyage south from New York, bound for Callao, Peru.

Of the boys Bob, from a natural love of sea-life, had shipped as a green hand before the mast.

Jack Hartley, a year older than sixteen-year-old Bob, had run off to sea to leave behind a life that he wanted to forget.

Of that, more later on.

The afternoon before, in growing rough weather, they had first sighted this island, uninhabited, Bostwick had declared, and surrounded by treacherous reefs.

Yet the skipper had chosen to make merry and had ordered up the grog.

He and the crew, believing in their luck, had sampled the grog all too freely.

Then, two hours before dark, the Allen had ploughed into windy weather.

Within an hour it had turned out a full-sized gale.

Partially sobered by his craft's danger, Bostwick had endeavored to shear off from the bleak island, now under the lee bow.

But the fore-topmast went, and after it the mizzen topmast.

The wreckage and the unsteadiness of the crew brought about pandemonium on the ship's deck.

Then, at the height of the brutish confusion, the Allen had struck and had driven hard and fast on the reef.

In their first despair skipper, mates and crew had again had recourse to the barrel of rum.

Then, fearing that the bark could not last the hour out, Bostwick had ordered away the long boat.

With this smaller craft jamming under the lee rail, Bostwick had managed to get his crew into the boat.

"Come on, boys!" he roared.

But Jack Hartley, cabin boy, and Bob Brewster, green hand, looked at the raging sea and then at the drunken ship's company.

"If I've got to go to the everlasting, I'm hanged if it'll be in such drunken, beastly company as that," growled Bob.

"Shake!" cried Jack, gripping the other's hand warmly. "And I choose to stay here and die with you rather than go with such a crew."

"Last call, boys!" bellowed the skipper.

"We stay aboard, sir!" Jack answered back over the booming of gale and running sea.

"Shove off!" ordered Bostwick, with a coarse, brutish oath.

So the long boat had surged away, leaving the two boys on the deck of the old, doomed craft.

And there they had remained through the rough night, praying, hoping—guessing, despairing.

And morning had found them still there.

As a sort of a miracle the Allen had held together through the long night.

When day broke the sea was running less heavily, but with a long, steady swell that still looked dangerous to these young landlubbers.

As they gazed out over the still troublous waters not a sign could they see of the long-boat that they had seen capsize within a hundred fathoms of the wreck.

Nor was there the sign of a floating body.

"Well," called Jack, in a voice whose tone did not run high with hope, "do you say that we lower the cutter?"

"Lower away," agreed Bob, also without enthusiasm.

Stationing themselves by the davits, the youngsters swung them outward.

There was a whirr of block and tackle, then the cutter lay in the water alongside on the lee.

Bob clambered down into the boat.

"I think we can handle her long enough to get away from the old tub, anyway," he called up. "Can you pass down the water and things?"

Nodding, our hero tugged at the cask, letting it down over the side in a rope sling.

"Safe!" tallied Brewster. "Now, the other things."

Item after item Jack Hartley let down.

And now, all in readiness, he let himself down last of all.

"Let go the tackle, and shove off," commanded Bob, taking command just now by virtue of his former position before the mast, Jack having been "only the cabin boy."

The tackle slipped, they shot out the oars, a pair apiece, and let the cutter drift away from the hulk's side.

"Now, give way," ordered Bob, at the bow oars, as he glanced ahead over his shoulder. "The wind's off-shore, so if we row just hard enough for headway we don't need to get stuck hard and fast on a reef."

"Easy goes," Jack nodded.

Though the waves had abated greatly since the ending of the gale, it was still no easy task to handle the boat in that sea.

Fortunately, the boat was of such light draft that they could see, by the dashing of the spray, just where the reefs stuck up enough to endanger them.

Yet, with the utmost care, three times did they get their small boat on a reef.

Each time, with the utmost of care, they got off again.

Nearly two hours of the hardest, most cautious kind of work—and, at last, inside the line of reefs they ran.

"Easy water now all the way to the beach," cheered Bob Brewster.

So it proved. The boat grated up on a sandy beach.

"Safe, in the bleakest part of the world," cheered Jack, as he bounded ashore, stretching his tired muscles as he glared at the steep, rock-bound lines of hills ahead.

"I wonder if there are any trees at all outside of the dozen stunted ones in sight?" queried Bob. "It won't take us long to burn them up for firewood."

"Cheer up," grimaced our hero. "From the looks of

the place we won't find anything to cook when our few tins are emptied."

"Oh, there must be fish out there in the water," urged Jack. "I've got tackle in the boat, and seeds that we can plant vegetables with."

"If we can find any water fresh enough to water a garden with," hinted Brewster.

"Oh, we mustn't begin to knock this island at the first look," objected Hartley. "Within a couple of hours we may be very well contented with our lot."

"I hope so," muttered Bob, doubtingly.

"Bear a hand, then, and we'll beach the boat."

"Then——?" hesitated Bob.

"Breakfast!"

"Spoken like a man after my own heart."

A long tug and a hard one, after which the cutter lay high and dry on the beach.

Then did the provisions and water come into demand.

Breakfast over, Jack picked up one of the rifles and a box of cartridges.

"Going to tote a gun?" demanded Bob. "We sure won't need any police protection on this big old granite pile."

"You can never tell," smiled Jack. "Besides, there may be something as big as lions or tigers somewhere up among those rocks."

"Going to tramp way up over those hills?" sighed Bob, as he picked up the other rifle.

"Sure. If we intend to stake out a claim to this island, we might as well know what it's good for. Come along."

Almost from the beach the slope upwards began.

Though there was some breeze down at the water's edge, this failed them before they had tramped a quarter of a mile inland.

"Whew!" muttered Brewster, mopping his streaming face. "Now I know what trolley cars are for."

There was something of a path up the hillside, so they kept to it.

"Hello!" muttered Jack, pointing to a soft piece of ground just ahead. "There are folks living here. See that print of a bare foot?"

"That's what it is," muttered Bob, in astonishment.

"Where on earth can they be, and what do they live on?"

"On shipwrecked people, perhaps," Jack retorted, grimly. "Keep your eyes open, and your gun handy. Here, you'd better let me go ahead. Keep thirty or forty feet behind me. Then, if we run into anything, we'll be spread out enough to fight a bit."

But suddenly Jack Hartley forgot all about this very wise caution.

Dropping his gun in his excitement, he pounced upon a piece of black, crumbly earth as big as his fist.

"Oh, Bob, for the love of wealth—quick!" he cried, turning upon his comrade to display a face that glowed with intense excitement.

"This is mica schist, Bob," Hartley explained, as he swiftly crumbled the blackish earth between his hands and held the mass out for Brewster to look at.

"Good to eat?" asked Bob, dully.

"Good to eat, you big glutton! No; but enough of this dirty stuff will buy you all the good things that the earth produces!"

"What did you say it was?" queried Brewster. "Mike, or——"

"Mica schist, you blockhead! And rich at that! See these little yellow particles running through the stuff?"

Bob took a good look, and at last it dawned upon him.

"Gold?" he asked, eagerly.

"Just that!" Jack emphasized. "The richest kind, too! Stuff just as good as this would tote out sixty dollars to the ton!"

"How do you know?" asked Bob, suddenly.

"How do I know?" Jack asked, almost savagely. "If there's one thing on earth that I do know, it's gold!"

"I've heard about a fake gold that they call pyrites—'fool's gold' is another name for it," said Bob, slowly. "We're fools to expect anything really good on this bleak hillside."

"Pyrites? Huh!" growled Jack, almost savagely. "Don't you suppose I know the difference?"

"Why, my father used to be a metallurgist," returned Hartley, quickly. "I've worked in his laboratory with him month after month."

"A metal—what?"

"A metallurgist, a man who assays ores to get the gold out of 'em. Bob, I tell you, I've learned to know the difference between gold and fake gold. This is the real thing—and rich!"

"Where did your father follow that trade? How did you come to learn it from him?" Bob asked, trying to grasp something of his comrade's unknown past history.

But Jack squared his jaw.

"Another time, perhaps; not now," he replied, shortly. "The only thing of interest, Bob, is that we've found a big gold claim on this bare old rock."

"And the footprints show that other people own the claims."

"That's so," our hero admitted, his face clouding.

Then he looked more hopeful again.

"No matter, Bob. We may find a bit here for ourselves. Now, we certainly will go forward. Think of it, Bob—rich, perhaps, within six months!"

Bob had caught the fever of the thing by this time.

Forgetting their earlier caution, the two boys tramped along side by side until they reached the top of the slope.

"Jerushy!" gasped Bob. Jack, in his amazement, did not attempt to speak at first.

For down the other side of the slope, over a broad, green plain, they found themselves gazing upon a beautiful stretch of country hemmed in by the hills.

Great stately groves, planted fields, bearing richly. Not less than three villages, of pretty, well-built little houses of one and two stories.

Near the central village a structure rose that must be a temple of some kind.

In the nearer fields they gazed upon dark-skinned, almost naked human beings at work.

"And this big old rock is charted as an uninhabited island!" flared Hartley.

"It looks pretty near like paradise down in those pretty towns and fields!" breathed Bob.

For a few moments more they stood in silent contemplation of the scene of beauty.

Then, warned by the voices of someone approaching, they took quick, easy grip of their rifles.

Around an edge of stone came five dark-skinned men.

Four of these, who carried spears, were all but nude.

But he who appeared to be their leader was robed in a single long garment of pure white.

Over this robe the leader wore ornaments of pure yellow metal.

Even the four who wore only breech-clouts and a band around the forehead were not lacking in smaller ornaments of that yellow metal.

"Gold! The real thing! And see how common it is here!" breathed Jack Hartley, joyfully.

In that instant the five on-comers caught sight of the two boys standing almost in their path.

In a twinkling, the natives had stopped and darted backward.

Then they halted, glaring with no favor at the young Americans.

But Bob Brewster, unable to take his gaze from those golden ornaments, gasped:

"Say, Jack, we're going to like this land all right!"

CHAPTER II.

THE DREAM OF WEALTH.

After that first start the man in white, who appeared to be about thirty years old, advanced slowly, his face showing that he was afraid.

He eyed the boys carefully, halting about twenty feet away from them.

"What do you do here?" he inquired in fair Spanish.

To Bob's surprise, Jack answered in the same tongue:

"We are travelers. Shipwrecked, we have come to explore the island."

"Who sent you?" queried the native, suspiciously.

"Sent us?" Jack repeated. "No one. It is accident that we are here. Our ship lies wrecked off the coast."

"But someone sent you?" persisted the native.

"No one," Jack insisted.

"We do not like strangers here," went on the native, suspiciously.

"Oh, you'll get used to us," smiled Jack. "We know how to make ourselves liked."

"No; we shall not like you. You come of a cruel people."

"Maybe you take us for Spaniards," protested Jack. "Spaniards?"

"Yes; the people whose language you are speaking."

"Is it not the language of all who come from the world beyond this island?"

"Say!" uttered Jack, earnestly. "You've got a lot to learn."

The native in the white robe drew himself up with extreme dignity.

"I? Much to learn? I am Hakka, the high priest, when he is not present."

"Oh, you're someone, when someone else isn't?" quizzed Hartley.

"I am Kalo, and the Deputy of Hakka, the reverend high priest of our people," came the answer, still with cold dignity.

"Glad to know you, Kalo—or Hakka," Jack replied, amiably.

"You have not told me the truth yet. Who sent you here?"

"I have told you that no one sent me," Jack retorted.

"I cannot believe it."

"You're out of luck, then," came, impatiently, from Hartley.

"You are evil, for you bring the lightning with you," persisted Kalo, suspiciously.

"The lightning? Oh, you mean these things?" smiled Jack, lifting his rifle.

In a twinkling Kalo drew back, trembling.

The four natives behind him threw themselves on the ground, moaning.

"Say," smiled Jack, looking aside at his chum, "this is going to be easy! These people know guns—and they're afraid."

"Those spears would give me a nervous attack," Bob declared. "That is, if I were surrounded by a howling lot of these dark-skinned rascals."

"I'm going to find out just how much they know about firearms," ventured Hartley.

"Go slow!" begged Bob. "I don't want to be punched full of holes by the puncture-makers that they carry."

But Jack, wholly disregarding the advice, raised his rifle.

In another instant Kalo had thrown himself forward on his face, as abjectly as his followers had already done.

"Point not the lightning at me," he begged.

"Oh, all right, then," Hartley agreed. "Get up and answer questions."

Meekly enough, now, Kalo obeyed.

"Who taught you to respect these lightning machines?" Jack demanded.

"Strangers who were here long ago," Kalo answered, slowly.

"Then you have not often seen these lightning-makers?"

"Not often, thanks to our gods."

"You need not fear me," Jack went on, coolly now.

"If you obey, we shall not harm you. But you must obey our orders."

"What do you want?" Kalo asked, doubtfully.

"How many people live on this island?"

"About eight thousand."

"You mine that precious yellow metal here?"

Kalo's eyes glittered with sudden rage.

"Ah! You came here for our gold? I knew it!"

"Answer my question!" insisted Jack, throwing some sternness into his tone. "You mine gold here?"

"It is so."

"And much of it?"

"Enough to make our ornaments and our sacred images."

"Images, eh?" smiled Jack. "We'll have a look at those."

Kalo's face, dark as it was, went almost white.

"You dare not," he cried. "It would be profanation of our temple. Even though we do not like your lightning, our people would rise and die before you in battle if you dared enter our temple!"

"That's a good thing to know," Jack muttered under his breath. "We won't press the temple business any. If these people ever rose against us, they'd soon find out for themselves how long two rifles could stand before eight thousand spears."

But aloud our hero asked:

"You have some kind of government here?"

"All worship the divine princess, Zendra, here—even the strangers who come at times."

"Is Zendra alive?"

"You must call her the princess!" warned Kalo, with another swift flash in his dark eyes.

"The Princess Zendra lives, then?"

"She has always lived, and always will," Kalo replied, coldly.

"What kind of a fairy yarn is that?" demanded Bob when our hero had translated for him.

"Kalo, you must take us to your princess," Jack declared.

The young priest drew back with a startled air.

"No strangers from the outside world have ever seen Princess Zendra. None ever shall!"

"Is that the Princess Zendra's rule?" Jack queried.

"It has always been her divine command," replied Kalo, quiveringly.

"She'll change it now, I hope," Jack replied, coolly. "We feel that we must see her. Lead the way, and we will follow!"

But Kalo, without budging, glared hotly at the boys.

"Will you rouse all our people to battle with you—hopeless though that battle may be?"

"I don't care," Jack replied, indifferently. "Let your people rise and rush into destruction against the lightning, if they want."

Kalo was trembling now.

"It'll be a good point to clinch, at once," Jack muttered to himself.

He had grown suddenly daring upon realizing in what great awe these natives stood of the mysterious rifles.

"I've a message for your princess," Hartley went on, coolly. "Tell her that we desire to see her; that we intend no harm to her people unless they bring it upon themselves. Tell your princess that we can explain our errand only to her. That she must see us, or else the lightning will destroy not only the people but the island as well."

Now Jack stopped, almost out of breath.

But he was watching Kalo narrowly.

"If the fellow swallows that, the game can be played up to the limit," our hero murmured to himself.

Kalo no longer seemed built on doubting lines.

"I will take your message to the Princess Zendra," he replied, stiffly. "Yet, until she has given her royal decision, you must wait here."

"Guess again," snapped Hartley. "The princess must see us, or she shall have no people left to reign over. And we must travel in state. You have some way of carrying people of high rank?"

"We have litters, though they are seldom used."

"Send for two litters," Jack commanded. "Send one of these men with you."

"I will go myself," proposed Kalo, with some eagerness.

"Forget that," counselled Hartley. "You will stay here and go in with us. Send one of your men on the errand."

"It will do little good," persisted Kalo. "I must go, or the order will not be obeyed."

"If you try to stir away from here the lightning will get you, Kalo!" Jack almost roared. "Send one of your men, as I told you—and send him quick—on your life!"

Hartley raised his rifle as if about to aim.

From his knees the deputy high priest called the order back in a tongue that neither boy could understand.

Yet it was a low, soft, musical speech.

Two of the natives instantly turned backward, trembling as if they feared to be shot in the back.

"You may sit down, Kalo, if you want," permitted Jack.

"Stranger, I tremble for you when the Princess Zendra hears your words."

"Do all your trembling in your own back yard," Jack ordered, sternly. "And until the litters come hold your tongue!"

Kalo's eyes flashed, but it was plain that he felt the need for obeying.

As the deputy high priest seated himself on the ground, Jack followed his example.

Bob, too, seated himself under the shade of a low tree.

Both youngsters kept their rifles ready for instant use.

It was a useless precaution, though. Plainly the natives stood in the greatest awe of the lightning-makers.

As they sat there Hartley repeated his conversation with Kalo, giving it to Bob in English.

"It's going to be a rich country, and an easy one, old fellow," Jack wound up.

"What do you mean to do? Force the people to give up their gold?"

Jack Hartley's eyes flashed with something very close to real anger.

"Bob Brewster, what has made you think that I'm a pirate?"

"Then how do you expect to get any of the gold?"

"Mine for it, the way these people do. Why not? It looks like a sure thing that these hills are fuller of gold than these people will ever need. When there's so much lying around loose why shouldn't we help ourselves to some of it? But we are not going to rob the people of what they've worked for, and we're not going to force anyone to do unpaid labor."

"You'll get into a heap of trouble playing this game?" predicted Bob Brewster.

"Good heavens, man! Isn't it worth a little trouble to pile up a fortune? Why, Bob, from the stuff I've seen as we came along, these hills are full of the easiest kind of gold to get at. We'll put our pile by and wait until we can signal some passing ship."

"I hope it turns out right," sighed the other boy.

"Oh, it will," Jack declared, confidently. "Whenever you're in doubt, just watch me."

They had fully an hour to wait, which they did lazily, passing no word with the silent, brooding Kalo in the meantime.

Then the sound of trotting feet came to the ears of the boys.

Around that same edge of rock came the litter-bearers, four to a litter.

Though they came at a trot, these men approached, plainly in fear.

At Kalo's command they halted.

"An escort of spearmen is below," he said, briefly, to the boys.

"Very good," nodded Jack. "They know about the lightning in case they're inclined to turn tricky?"

"You are now under the hospitality of the princess," Kalo replied in an offended tone. "No harm can be offered to those who go to the princess."

Jack was on the point of apologizing, then thought the better of it.

"It isn't necessary to be ugly with these people," he explained to Brewster. "But we must let them see that we feel way above 'em."

"We're lucky enough if they don't rig ropes around our necks and hoist us above 'em," vented Bob.

Now at the command from Kalo the litter-bearers knelt.

The deputy high priest signed to the boys to take their places on the litters.

Each litter consisted of two parallel poles of a wood that looked much like bamboo.

Between the poles, except at the ends, was woven a matting of grasses—light yet strong.

At a sign from Hartley, the bearers moved Bob's litter alongside his own.

"I hope this is the very best style of litter on the island," smiled Jack.

"Why?" Bob asked, dubiously.

"Because there's going to be trouble if I find out that these people send a second-class man-hack to tote us on."

Bob sighed. He was sure that he saw big trouble ahead. Kalo's litter passed on ahead as the bearers started.

A little way down the road a dozen spearmen fell in ahead of the litters, while a score more brought up the rear.

Even in the first quarter of a mile of that winding descent the road grew broader and better.

Then, down on the level of the great, broad valley, the road became fine indeed.

Now they traveled along, the bearers going always at a trot, through groves of trees that bore luscious fruits and past the rich planted fields.

"I don't see anyone working in these fields now," observed Bob, curiously.

"Small wonder," Jack smiled back at him. "They've heard of the coming of the lightning-makers."

"They've skedaddled?"

"Played twenty-three!"

"I wonder if we'll find the town ahead as bare of people?" speculated Brewster, rising on his elbow to look ahead at the village of white stone and plaster houses that was now in sight.

In the yards surrounding the larger houses cool fountains were playing.

But no one was in sight.

Then down a street lined with buildings that plainly contained stores they passed.

But still not a glimpse of a human being anywhere, except for the little procession itself.

"A lightning-rod agent could do a rush business here," Jack chuckled to his mate. "You see how we've got the natives scared!"

"Or else they're busy springing an ambush for us," uttered Bob, doubtfully. "Hartley, I don't like the looks of it when a town closes up by way of welcoming strangers."

"The temple," checked off Jack, as they came in sight of the biggest white building in the town.

It was really a massive structure, some forty feet in height, with great arched windows in which there was not a particle of glass, but, instead, curtains of woven grasses.

There was neither dome nor steeple to this great building devoted to such worship as the natives had. Instead, over the main entrance, was a high arch.

But the temple, like the other buildings, now appeared to be deserted.

"Some human beings ahead, at last," uttered Bob, with a sigh of relief.

Just down the street from the temple, before a low white wall with an arched gateway in the center, stood fully a hundred spearmen, each clad only in his breech-clout, the band around his forehead, and in each case a few gold ornaments.

And now Kalo raised a cry, at sound of which all but the six spearmen nearest the gate threw themselves down on their faces.

"That's doing it well," observed Hartley, calmly.

"I hope their present notion of us lasts," murmured Bob.

In a twinkling the spearmen were on their feet once more.

They drew up in lines on either side of the street as the trotting litter-bearers came to a halt.

"Be pleased to descend from your litters, excellencies," desired Kalo, using that title for the first time, as he approached the boys, whose bearers had just knelt. "Be good enough to wait while I inquire if Princess Zendra be ready to receive you."

All the spearmen except those closest to the gate stood with bowed heads as Kalo passed between them.

"That gives one some idea of the fellow's rank here," thought Jack.

"Stand close, and keep your eye on things," whispered Bob, uneasily. "These brown pirates would be glad of a chance to jump us."

"Now, I don't believe they dare to," Hartley answered. "But I'm going to keep my eyes peeled just the same."

Kalo had disappeared past the gate, a swinging one that closed after him.

Barely three minutes was he gone when he reappeared.

"The Princess Zendra is ready to see the lightning-makers," he announced.

With a nod Jack followed, after a whispered caution to Bob to keep a few feet to the rear and to be watchful.

But none else passed the swinging gates with them.

On the other side of the high wall the boys found themselves in a large outdoor enclosed space—a park, and a beautiful one of some five or six acres in extent.

Here and there, among the groves and flower-beds, and behind grassy lawns on which fountains played, were various picturesque little buildings, all of the same white plaster and stone material of which all the buildings in this valley were constructed.

Kalo, without looking back, led the way to a picturesque pavillion near the edge of the park.

The entrance was through an arched gateway, and here no matting gate shut out the view inside.

"Pass in," requested Kalo, stepping aside.

"Ware treachery!" whispered Bob, sharply, hoarsely.

Jack Hartley strode in through the gateway with confident tread.

There was a good deal of swagger in his gait, for now, if ever, he believed, he must put his most daring foot forward.

Then, all of a sudden, inside, the boy came to his senses.

He stopped, all of the brag gone out of his demeanor.

Click! came his heels together, as he straightened up.

Then, shifting his rifle to his left hand, his right sought his hat, which he lifted and bowed as low as he could.

CHAPTER III.

TWO BOYS WAKE UP.

Jack Hartley stood in the presence of royalty, and he knew it!

Had she not been the Princess Zendra by rank, the American boy would still have been prepared to worship.

There were walls only to this apartment. Overhead the sky showed.

At the further end of the apartment was a curtain.

But in sight there was only a large table, covered with some tapestry of woven grass, and beside it a seat.

Only that one seat in the room, and now, as the two intruders entered, a beautiful vision of womanhood rose as if from a throne.

At her side stood a bloodhound of rare breed. The animal gazed at the armed boys suspiciously.

Not less suspicious was Princess Zendra's own regard. Yet in her face there was not one sign of fear.

Her age? Kalo had told them that she lived forever. Jack, in that first moment of astonishment, could not have guessed whether this royal young woman was sixteen or thirty years of age.

All our hero saw was her amazing beauty, her queenly carriage, her commanding, undaunted air.

Beautiful, indeed, she was, and with a figure that would have set a sculptor mad.

Her garment, a simple one of white, spotless in its purity, her feet were unshod, her arms bare to the shoulders.

In her hand as she rose she carried a light rod.

If there was no fear, neither was there menace in Zendra's eyes as she looked at the boys.

But Jack Hartley, utterly abashed and conquered, would have surrendered his very rifle in that moment of daze had he been commanded to do it.

"She wins," was the boy's first startled thought. "We'll give up our lightning-makers and swim away from the island if she asks it."

Bob Brewster was hardly less impressed.

It was Princess Zendra who first broke the silence.

"You have demanded to see me?" she asked, in a voice that thrilled Hartley and set his pulses to throbbing.

She spoke in Spanish, as Kalo had done, and our hero answered her in the same tongue:

"Yes, Princess Zendra."

She looked him over again, with a slight flash in her eyes.

"How much tribute do you demand?" she asked.

"Tribute?" Jack repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes. Surely you understand the word?"

There was frigid impatience in her voice.

"We do not understand the word when it is applied to the Princess Zendra and her people," Jack answered in a low voice.

"Then why this insolence? Why the threat to destroy my people if I did not grant you audience at once?"

She looked at him with cold curiosity as she finished.

Jack's voice was very low, almost tremulous, as he answered:

"That was before we had seen the Princess Zendra."

The girl's face flushed angrily at his words.

And now Jack Hartley realized, for the first time, that though her cheeks were browned somewhat by the sun that shone down over the island, yet this royal young creature was unmistakably a white woman.

Her features were distinctly different from those of her subjects.

"Do not carry your insolence further," she cried, angrily.

"But I assure the Princess Zendra that I intended no insolence whatever," Jack replied, trying to make his tone as sweet as honey.

For, coming to himself, he had formed a sudden, daring resolve.

The dream of wealth to be obtained here on the island had swiftly revived.

Yet with it came another determination, vastly more important.

He would win this young princess herself, even though he had to take his place as prince-consort and remain here all the rest of his days.

Beyond a doubt some of this purpose was conveyed by the ardent look that he flashed upon this beautiful creature.

"You are tiring me," cried Zendra, impatiently and warningly. "Name the tribute, and have done. After that Hakka shall deal with you. Hakka, come here!"

The curtain moved aside. Into the apartment stepped a brown-skinned man like Kalo in color, and robed in the same fashion, except that garb and ornaments betokened a still higher rank.

"Hakka, the high priest!" flashed through Jack's mind. "Probably the prime minister of this queer little government, too."

Hakka, as he neared the princess, threw himself to his knees, then struck his forehead three times against the ground. After which he rose, standing respectfully by.

But his burning black eyes remained turned on the features of Jack Hartley.

"Hakka," said the princess, "deal with these barbarians. I cannot endure them."

"Barbarians? Endure?" Jack felt hot flashes mounting to his face.

"I beg that the Princess Zendra will not go away," he pleaded. "I have much to say to her."

The princess, in the act of turning, wheeled again to regard the young speaker.

"What can you have to say to me, since Hakka can arrange for the tribute?" she asked, contemptuously.

"You speak of tribute again," Jack answered. "We came to seek none."

"What, then?"

"I am sorry if the Princess Zendra believes us to be robbers," Jack went on in his sweetest voice and fixing his bright eyes on the royal girl's face.

"What, then, if you are not thieves?" questioned the girl, wonderingly.

"Princess, we beg only that we may remain here with you and your people, to serve your interests and guard you against danger."

"Danger?" repeated Zendra, in amazement. "Danger—from my people?"

"From anyone," replied Jack, promptly and boldly, as he held his rifle forward. "You will remember that we make lightning, and that we would be valuable guards between you and any danger that threatens you."

"And you do not seek gold?" she demanded, unbelievably.

"Absolutely none, princess."

A puzzled but softer look came into the royal girl's face.

A moment of silence, then she turned and seated herself.

"What say you of this, Hakka?" she questioned, turning to the high priest.

"I am amazed," answered Hakka. "I almost doubt."

"Then forget your doubts," Jack urged, warmly. "We seek nothing but to serve the Princess Zendra."

"Now, what on earth is the game he's hitting at?" wondered Bob Brewster, who had remained silent throughout.

A different light came into Hakka's eyes as his gaze met the puzzled look of his royal mistress.

Then, swiftly, the priest turned to the boys.

"If you really would serve the princess," he requested, "tell us how it is that you make the lightning strike?"

"Why, that's easy enough," began our hero, promptly. He reached into a pocket for a cartridge.

Then sober second thought came to him just in the nick of time.

"It's easy enough," Jack added, glibly, "when you've been born to the art. But you have to be born to it."

The crafty look in the high priest's eyes was followed by one of disappointment.

"Will you let me examine your lightning-maker?" was Hakka's next question.

Like a flash Jack wheeled back toward Bob. In that swift instant our hero extracted the one cartridge that was in the magazine of his rifle.

As he wheeled about again Hartley handed the rifle to the high priest.

But Bob Brewster, warned by his mate's action, stood alertly on guard.

"It is an odd-looking instrument," said the high priest, slowly. "I would like to see it used."

"That shall be done at any time when we are outside of here," Hartley promised, rashly. "Show me a bird at any time and I will show you how swiftly and certainly the lightning strikes."

"Oh, the blooming idiot!" groaned Bob, inwardly. "He'll be sure to miss, and then it will be hey-day with us all right! The chump!"

For Jack had spoken in English, and now Hakka looked at him in bewilderment.

Not so the princess. She regarded the boy with a start of surprise.

"Then you speak that strange tongue, too?" she cried.

"Many languages," Jack lied, recklessly.

Now Hakka, finding them speaking in a tongue that he could not follow, broke in sharply in his own native dialect.

Princess Zendra flushed, then bowed her head meekly as though taking a merited scolding.

But the sight of her humiliation sent the hot blood coursing through Jack's veins.

"Does your adviser dare to threaten to scold you, princess?" the boy asked. "If he does, tell him that I can make the lightning strike him at any instant."

"Oh, no, no, no!" she cried, quickly. "You do not understand. His person is as sacred as my own. He is the high priest of my people!"

Hakka, though he could not understand a word of this passage in English, must have guessed its purport, for Bob Brewster, watching him, saw a look that made him mutter warningly:

"Get your gun back, Jack! Don't trust him! He's N. G."

That last sentence caused the princess to turn wondering eyes at Bob, who, in slang, had gone beyond her depth in English.

"We'll bottle his nibs later," advised Bob. "Play a low hand just now."

Again Princess Zandra failed to comprehend slang.

"May we speak with you alone, princess?" Jack asked, still in English.

"Why not with my minister here?"

"I have that to say which even he must not hear. It concerns your own welfare. You need have no fear of being alone with us. We shall worship you as your own people do."

And Jack looked at her so honestly that Princess Zandra, without flushing, turned and spoke to Hakka in his own dialect.

Scowling a bit, the high priest knelt and struck his head three times against the floor. Then, rising, he went out through the gate by which the boys entered.

"Now," began Jack, "I hope the Princess Zandra understands that the most we wish is to serve her faithfully. Do we ask too much?"

"To serve," replied the girl, slowly, "you must obey. Will you do that?"

"Why not?"

"That is not the way to reply. Will you obey me?"

"Try us," begged Jack.

"Then give up your lightning-makers."

"Cheese!" grunted Bob, sharply.

"Anything but that, princess," Jack pleaded. "You do not understand, or you would not ask that."

"I understand too well!" Zandra returned, stiffly. "You will not serve me."

"Won't you trust us—trust to our friendliness—to our devotion to you?" Hartley pleaded.

"No! Go!"

There was sudden anger in her eyes as she pointed toward the gate.

"But——" he started to protest.

"Go!" Now her voice was almost harsh with anger.

"Princess, you are unjust——"

"You are insolent, wretch! Go!"

Flushing, Jack bowed, turned and started toward the gate.

Something in his bearing, however, caused Bob to mutter uneasily to himself:

"Hartley's mad clean through! He'll raise Hob when he gets out."

Through the gate side by side marched the boys.

Then, like a flash, something happened.

Natives concealed on either side of that gate leaped at them.

Twist! wrench! The young Americans were minus their lightning-makers.

Moreover, they were struggling in the grasp of husky men. Bob was fairly rushed off his feet past the gate.

"Bind the impudent barbarians!" cried Princess Zandra, gliding to the gateway, her bloodhound at her side. "Send them both to be slaves in my mines."

Jack fought desperately, but a trip from behind sent him sprawling, and the first assailant piled upon him.

That dream of wealth vanished.

Gone, too, was the hope of a lucky love!

CHAPTER IV.

HAKKA PLAYS HIS GAME.

Ping! pang! click-clack! Chug! chug!

Jack Hartley and his chum had found out where the natives of this island got their gold.

The American boys were helping to get that gold, but not under conditions that promised any increase in their own fortunes.

For three weeks now they had toiled in one of the mines up on one of the hillsides overlooking the valley.

They were at work now, as they had been every day

during the past three weeks, hard at work with a dozen native slaves.

The gang toiled under the watchful eyes of four spear-men—big, muscular fellows who delighted in cruelty to the slaves at the slightest provocation.

Crude, old-fashioned tools these Wahititans worked with.

In the time that had passed these American youngsters had gained a very fair idea of the simple native dialect.

They had learned that the natives called their rock-bound island Wahitite.

They had learned that the claim that the princess lived forever was not strictly true.

Instead, Princess Zendra had descended from a long line of heavenly ancestors. All of the princesses of Wahitite had been white-skinned, so the native legends ran.

The white skin was proof that the princess came direct from heaven to rule.

But a white skin was also subject to other beliefs.

The devils of these Wahititans were also white-skinned.

"And, talking of devils," sighed Bob Brewster, drearily, "these people believe we're it!"

Certainly the two American boys had been treated with a peculiar showing of hate from the first.

No sooner had they been held and bound than the people flocked from everywhere to have a look at the "lightning-makers," who were always classed as "devils."

Hakka, who had planned the treachery against them, had been the first to kick them after their dreaded tools of lightning had been taken from them.

As they were dragged through the town by all but naked native soldiers, men, women and children called out curses after them, and threw decayed fruit and stones at them.

Then up to this bare spot on the hillside they had been dragged.

Here a tunnel had been slowly dug in under the ground.

It was now so far in that the slaves, toiling for ore, were forced to work by the light of torches.

Long implements they had, much like mauls, but with sharp pieces of stone made fast at the lower ends.

With these stone heads the slaves picked and worked away, loosening ore.

When enough had been loosened they laid aside their picks and packed the ore to the mouth of the tunnel in woven baskets.

From there other slaves packed the ore down into the valley to a point where the Wahitite smelting works were located.

How the smelting of the ore was done the boys did not yet know.

Probably the method was as crude and simple as the manner in which the ore was gotten out of the earth.

Pink! pank! They toiled on at the head of the gang of slaves, slowly digging into the earth and increasing the length of the tunnel.

As they worked, however, the slaves were allowed to talk.

It was for this reason that the boys had had a chance to learn the Wahititan dialect.

They used this tongue now for practice, except when they talked of their own affairs.

Bob now spoke in English:

"Jack, old fellow, this life is beginning to wear me out."

"Me, too," nodded Hartley, as he toiled on, not daring to rest for a moment under the watchful gaze of the spearmen.

"Is this thing going to last for life?"

"So I judge. Only the worst criminals on the island are made slaves. One fellow told me yesterday that a slave is never released from the mines, until——"

"Until——" persisted Brewster.

"Not until death releases him!"

"Say," gasped Brewster, a line of pallor showing under the dirt that streaked his face.

In his consternation he stopped work.

Jab! The sharp prick of a spear-point made him wince and hurry to resume his work.

"Do you think that's straight?" Bob demanded.

"I think it is," Jack sighed.

"Hang that miserable wench of a so-called princess, then!" uttered Brewster, with all his heart.

"Don't say that!" begged Jack, gently.

"Why not?"

"She did right, according to her own way of seeing things."

"She did, eh? Sending us up here to work our lives out at the rate of twelve hours a day? Worked with a slave gang, housed with a slave gang, never allowed to go a hundred feet past the mouth of this tunnel? So sore every night that we can hardly bear to lie down for the pain it gives us? Did right, did she!" cried Brewster, warmly.

"Well, we made her think we bossed a scheme by which we could wipe the island off the map if we wanted to."

"You made her believe that?" Brewster rejoined.

"True," sighed Hartley. "I did. I was an idiot. It was a sheer case of getting fresh and being paid hard for it. And I dragged you into my scrape, Bob, poor old fellow."

"I didn't mean to say that," cried Bob, penitently. "No, no—it wasn't all your fault. Not by a jugful! I helped. We're both paying up for the bluff we tried to run."

"If we're here for life," groaned Jack, desperately, "then I hope the life will be a short one."

"It can't be too short," Bob promptly agreed.

"You're wanted, you two white devils," announced a spearman, coming up through the tunnel.

"Us?" asked Jack.

"Yes. Drop your tools and come."

Wondering, almost daring to hope for something cheer-

ing, the boys dropped their picks and followed the spearman.

At the mouth of the tunnel, Jack Hartley, blinking in the sunlight, experienced a thrill of surprise.

There stood Hakka, as cold and stately as ever, a little apart from the twenty spearmen and the litter-bearers who had accompanied him.

But most surprising of all was the fact that the high priest carried, gingerly, one of the rifles taken from the boys three weeks before.

"Follow me," called Hakka, striding forward and passing on up the hill road.

Jack and Bob followed in wonder.

Hakka did not trouble to look behind him.

He feared no violence.

If these boys attempted to jump upon him they would fall into the hands of the spearmen, who would cut them to pieces.

Out of ear-shot of his followers Hakka halted, wheeling about.

"Well," he observed, looking at the boys keenly, maliciously, "the mine does not seem to agree with you."

"Did you think it would?" Jack demanded, with a tinge of sarcasm.

"Would you like to leave the mine?" queried the high priest.

"Of course," Jack returned promptly.

"Would you earn your liberty?"

"How?"

"Show me how this wicked toy is used to make lightning," hinted Hakka, holding up the rifle.

"Would you fool with that which must bring destruction upon you?" Jack asked, keenly.

Hakka looked at him sharply.

"Teach me, and I can use it as well as anyone," returned the high priest. "Am I not sacred? Cannot I use anything that mere men may use?"

"You wish to use it in the service of Princess Zendra?" queried Hartley.

"Even so."

"Then have us released, restore the lightning-makers to us, and we will use them in the princess's service better than anyone else can ever learn to do," our hero promised, eagerly.

But Hakka laughed scornfully.

"I am not a fool," he replied.

"Tell him," warned Bob, in a low voice in English, "and his nibs would practice on us first of all."

"Like his nibs, I'm not a fool," Jack sent back.

"Will you show me?" asked Hakka.

"It would never do, Hakka. You were not born to use the lightning-maker, and you would surely destroy yourself at the first attempt."

"You lie!" said the high priest, bluntly.

Then, drawing from a pouch under his robe one of the rifle cartridges, he held it up before the boy.

"Do you open the lightning-maker here at the back,

and slip this little round object in?" he questioned, looking searchingly at Jack's face.

But our hero was on his guard. He betrayed nothing by his looks.

"Whatever way you attempt it, Hakka, you will destroy yourself. I cannot show you, for you were not born to the art. But you will destroy yourself, I tell you. And there is one way you can use the lightning-maker that will destroy the very island and cause it to sink in the sea."

"Another lie!" thundered Hakka, angrily. "For the last time, will you show me how this curious tool is used?"

"Then, for the last time, Hakka, I answer you that I dare not."

"Dare not?" insisted the high priest.

"Dare not," Hartley replied, firmly. "For we do not want to sink to death along with the island."

"You speak nothing but lies!" roared the high priest. "But I shall find a way to bring the truth from you."

To the spearmen waiting below he signalled, and they came up on the run.

"To the town with these liars!" called the high priest. "They shall learn to speak the truth after they have passed through the torment of the molten gold!"

"Torment!" Both boys thrilled at the grim word.

But Hakka had strode angrily away, bearing the rifle with him.

Hemmed in by the spearmen, the wretched white slaves were ordered to march.

There could be no choice but to obey.

Hakka and a few of his spearmen went on ahead at a swifter pace, while Jack and Bob were allowed to go at a lesser pace.

No mercy was this, however, as they found out when they descended the road into the valley.

Again the Wahititan people turned out by hundreds, warned by runners of what was coming in the way of a public spectacle.

These people—men, women and children—strode along close to the spearmen, shouting revilings and hurling pebbles and old fruit at the boys.

"We're in for something tough!" groaned Bob.

"Whatever the torment of the molten gold means," Jack replied, heartsick at the realization of his helplessness.

Bob turned to his chum in sudden horror.

"Jack, old fellow, do you think they mean to dip us in the stuff, or pour it on our flesh?"

"That's what it sounds like!" Jack uttered, grimly.

"Oh, it'll be something good and ripe, all right, with Hakka at the bottom of it!" faltered Brewster.

Just before the temple was reached the crowd fell back, as if afraid to follow further.

But under the great arched gateway of the temple the boys were marched by their spearmen-captors.

Across an inner court they were marched and up to the doorless opening of a room under the wall.

"In there with you!" ordered the leader of the spearmen.

Rather than be jabbed by the sharp points of the weapons the wretched white slaves obeyed at once.

They found themselves in a high-ceilinged, cell-like room some twelve feet square.

Out in the courtyard beyond the spearmen threw themselves upon the ground.

It was quite needless to say that the boys could not hope to rush out past these armed guards.

Jack shot a desperate look at the window.

The sight of it almost broke his heart.

It was but a narrow slit in the solid stone wall, an opening some six inches wide and three feet high.

"Nothing but a fairy could slip through that," he uttered, dispiritedly to Brewster.

"And, even if we got through," moaned Bob, "what would be the good? We can't get off the island."

Whatever torment might be ahead of them, Hakka appeared to be in no hurry about it.

"Maybe the game won't be played to-day," Bob suggested, hopefully.

"I'm afraid it will," Jack sighed.

"Then what on earth are they waiting for?"

"They must be melting the gold."

CHAPTER V.

ERMA, 'TWINX LOVE AND LOYALTY.

Two suspense-laden hours went by.

Out in the courtyard the spearmen, still seated, were playing some sort of a game with dice made from the bones of birds.

The boys had not attempted to escape.

What would be the use?

Even if they succeeded in getting beyond the temple gate, they would surely be caught and brought back.

Jack had stretched himself out on the floor, trying his best to sleep as a means of forgetting the miseries in store for him.

Just within the last moment Hartley had succeeded by falling off into a light doze.

Bob, on the other hand, unable even to bear the thought of lying down, leaned miserably against the wall.

"Hist!"

Bob started in an instant.

Then, choking back a cry of joy, he stole on tiptoe across the cell to the little slit-like window.

"Erma!" he breathed.

That same signal aroused Jack out of his painfully light sleep.

As our hero opened his eyes and sat up, he caught sight of a worried brown little face that was very pretty.

"Bob's girl!" Jack thought grimly. "A lot of use she's been able to be to him, poor little thing!"

But Bob, in this moment, was thinking only of the pleasure of looking into a pair of eyes of which he had grown mighty fond.

Erma was one of the maids who attended Princess Zendra.

By a strange contrast, the girl's father was one of the life prisoners out at the mine.

He had slain a man in temper, and not even his daughter's faithful service to the fair ruler of Wahitite had sufficed to earn the old man a pardon for his crime.

But Erma was allowed to visit her father, and this she had done often, her time for the visit being during the noon-day meal of the slave mines on the ground just outside the tunnel.

So it had happened that Erma and Brewster had met.

They had exchanged glances, and, by degrees, the glances had become longer and fuller of meaning.

No word of love had passed between the young pair, so strangely and hopelessly parted.

Erma, unable to secure her father's pardon, would be still less able to secure the pardon of such a cordially hated slave as Bob.

So their acquaintance had hardly extended beyond looks, save that Erma had often slipped to Bob some dainty bit of food or luscious article of fruit.

But Bob had been happy in the thought of Erma—as happy, that is, as one can be who is doomed to life servitude.

Erma's eyes, red from weeping, told the story now better than words could have done.

"No one can see me from here," she whispered. "I could not keep from coming. I knew you would like to have one more look at me—the last!"

"The last look?" echoed Bob. "What do you mean?"

"Do you not know what the torment of gold is?"

"No! What, Erma?"

"Oh, I shudder to tell you. I cannot!"

"But we must know," insisted Bob.

"No, no; I cannot tell you!"

"Then you refuse me?"

Bob's look was so hurt that the tears came afresh to the girl's eyes.

"Oh, try to cause Hakka to relent, if you can," she sobbed. "The torment of gold—that means when one's eyes are sealed up forever by the flow of the hot metal into them!"

To be blinded!

That thought struck instant, dumb, unutterable horror to the hearts and brains of both boys.

"Oh, I should not have told you," faltered the girl, brokenly.

"I'm glad you did," answered Bob, faintly. "Now, at least, we know what's ahead of us."

"Take your last look at my face, if it has pleased you,"

urged the girl. "After another hour you will not be able to see my face again."

"Oh, you dear girl!" cried Bob, breaking down. "Then you have loved me—as I have loved you?"

Erma held her head up proudly.

"Yes. Why should I be ashamed to declare it? Yes. I have loved you, though they have tried to tell me that you are a white devil."

Bob could not kiss that pretty brown face so close to his.

The slit-like window was not wide enough.

But he did manage to reach out with his hand and to give Erma's hand a mighty squeeze.

"Erma," broke in Jack, suddenly, "have you seen our lightning-makers lately?"

"I saw them both just before I started to come here," the girl answered, looking at him affrightedly.

"Where?"

"In the room of the princess, at the park. Hekka had taken one, but he brought it back just before I left."

"And they're both there now?" breathed Jack, eagerly.

"Both."

"And any of those little round things about the length of my finger?"

This was the nearest description our hero could give of cartridges that the girl would understand.

"Yes," she replied, slowly. "Two boxes of them."

"Erma," throbbed Jack, "do you love my friend enough to cast your lot with him? Will you share his dangers along with his love?"

"If I could," faltered the girl.

"Erma, you can. And you can save us both from the torment of the molten gold! Bring us the lightning-makers! You can slip them under your robe, and none will be the wiser! And be sure to bring the two boxes of the little round things!"

"But that would be betraying my princess," faltered the girl.

"Never! Not for a moment!" thrilled Jack Hartley. "We will never do harm to the princess."

"If I could believe you!" cried the girl, wildly.

She was plainly hesitating betwixt love and the spirit of loyalty to her royal mistress. "For I love the Princess Zendra with the same great love that Bob bears for you."

But loyalty won.

"No, no! Not even for my dear love will I betray the Princess Zendra!" Erma cried.

"Erma," whispered Jack, frantically, "no harm can ever come to Princess Zendra. Listen! I will tell you that which not even the princess knows. It shall prove to you that I could not harm her. For I love the Princess Zendra with the same great love that my friend swears for you. Erma, you cannot refuse. It is our one last hope for life, and every moment is precious."

"But my royal mistress!" faltered the girl.

"She will come to no harm, but to good. I have promised you that."

The girl's lips quivered, the tears starting once more in her eyes.

"I leave her to you, Bob," whispered Jack in English.

Our hero strolled across the cell, turning his back on that young couple.

In a few moments Bob touched him on the shoulder.

"Erma has gone," he whispered.

"For the guns?" demanded Jack, wheeling around.

"Yes."

"Good girl! Great girl! But I knew she would."

"If Erma gets into any trouble," quavered Bob, "I shall not forgive you nor myself."

"Somehow," said Jack, lightly, "I feel convinced that she isn't going to get into any trouble."

"I hope you're right," sighed Bob.

"There's only one danger that I see," Jack pursued. "Erma is frightfully loyal to the princess."

"That's no fault," Bob retorted, warmly.

"But it'll be tough if the girl repents, and really does tell the princess—and Hakka—what we wanted her to do."

"She won't!" predicted Bob.

Nevertheless, even the very-much-in-love Brewster began to wonder, uneasily, whether Erma ranked love or loyalty highest.

If she failed them in their present desperate plight!

Once the "torment of the molten gold" was inflicted, these young Americans could have no possible use for their "lightning-makers."

CHAPTER VI.

HAKKA TAKES A LESSON IN SHOOTING.

"Psst!"

That soft but sharp hail brought both boys quickly about.

Erma's eyes, red again, and her face one mass of pallor, told of bad news.

"You couldn't get the lightning-makers?" Bob whispered, as quickly as he could reach the narrow slit of a window.

"No. Some one else has them."

"Perdition!"

"Hakka has your strange tools!"

"There's no show to get them, then!" quivered Jack, who stood beside his chum.

"Was there ever such luck?" moaned Bob.

"I tried—so hard!" protested Erma, her voice trembling.

"Of course you did, dear girl!"

"Sh! I hear some one coming. I must go! Good-by, loved one!"

Erma's sweet face was gone in a twinkling.

The two boys faced each other, despair written in their faces.

"It's all over," groaned Brewster.

"All but the blinding," sighed Jack.

"That infernal Hakka!"

"We'll take it gamely, anyway, Bob—we've got to!"

"Oh, if I only had something to fit these to!" gasped Brewster.

Plunging a hand into a pocket he drew forth three short cartridges.

"Revolver cartridges? Thirty-eights?" throbbed Jack Hartley. "Bob—oh, glory!"

It was Jack's own turn to go to his pocket.

Now, before his chum's excited eyes, he flourished a short, bulldog revolver.

"Where on earth did you get that?" trembled Bob.

"I've had it ever since we came ashore."

"You didn't tell me."

"It didn't seem worth while, since we had no ammunition—or, at least, I thought we hadn't. But now!"

With trembling fingers Jack had loaded the weapon with the three cartridges.

All of a sudden the glow died out of Bob's eyes.

"They won't do us any good," he muttered. "We can't scare a small nation with three cartridges. We can down the first three men—if we don't miss any. Then the mob'll jump us and find out there isn't any more lightning left. What's the use?"

"Oh, I don't expect to escape, or to assert our mastery over the island's inhabitants," replied Jack, very slowly and very solemnly.

"What on earth are you going to do with the gun, then?"

"Bob, sooner than be tormented and blinded, I'm going—well, I'm going to blow the top of my own head off. And I'll shoot you first, if you want, old fellow!"

Jack's voice trembled over this last part of the proposition.

"Shoot me?" quivered Bob, his eyes brightening. "I guess you can—every time—sooner than let me get under that gold torment!"

"You want me to do it, then—at the last moment?" quavered Hartley.

"I beg you to do it, old fellow! And now I'm not afraid of their old torment! But be sure you make a good job of it!"

"Yes," Jack promised, weakly.

"But that third bullet?"

"That," Hartley rejoined, "is for whatever native is nearest to us at the moment. In the excitement that will follow the shooting of a native there'll be time enough for me to do the real double job."

Jack's voice was steadier now.

He was ready for the final act in their lives. Both he and Bob regarded their own shooting as the easiest way out of their troubles.

"Come," called one of the spearmen, looking in through the doorway.

Jack, with the revolver safely tucked away out of sight,

marched out first. Right behind him came Bob Brewster. Both boys were holding their heads high.

They faced their fate with confidence and courage.

Smiles passed between the spearmen, who thought they knew what was ahead of the youngsters.

Between the two files of spearmen they filed out through the main gateway of the temple and turned down the broad street to the right.

Bang! That unexpected sound caused both boys to jump nearly a foot high.

Crack!

"Now, what on earth is that?" pulsed Bob.

But the light of understanding was gleaming in Jack's eyes.

"Hakka——" he began excitedly.

"Oh, lordy! Then that scoundrel has learned how to use the guns?"

"That's it! He's been pretty well on to the idea for some days."

"Then we're fakirs now with our lightning," grunted Bob, grimly. "Jack, you'll have to shoot fast when the time comes. The crowd won't stand any bluffs after Hakka has told 'em a thing or two."

While these words were being exchanged their guards had marched the boys down to the wide plaza, or public square.

Undoubtedly two thousand people had turned out. It was a silent throng that awaited the destined victims.

On one side of the plaza were ranged the men, in their breech-clouts, head-bands and golden ornaments.

Across the square were the women, in their short white skirts, and the naked children.

Over the whole throng was an air of oppressive silence.

Fully a hundred spearmen were drawn up in the plaza.

But it was a small, table-like affair in the center of the plaza that held the horrified gaze of the doomed boys.

On this glowed a charcoal fire—over it an iron pot from which dense steam came up.

This was the molten gold.

Close to the table stood a man with a crude bellows, patiently fanning the flame.

Not many inches away from the fire rested an iron ladle with which the cruel work was to be done.

"Keep your nerve, and shoot straight!" throbbed Bob, as he and his chum were halted a dozen feet away from the pot of molten metal.

"My nerve's all right!" came the crisp answer.

The crowd, after its first stare at the boys, grew listless.

Plainly all was not yet ready for the torment.

"Waiting for the executioner, eh?" asked Bob, in an undertone.

"Must be," Jack answered, one hand ready to snatch his revolver at the right instant.

"Wonder if Hakka does the job himself?"

"I hope so," gritted Jack, vengefully. "That will give me a chance to use the first bullet on him. Whew! Wouldn't that be great?"

From up the street came a blast from the conch-shell horns.

A moment later the first of a squad of spearmen came into sight.

"Gracious!" quivered Jack, looking with all his eyes.

For, behind the first files of spearmen, appeared Hakka and Kalo, followed by subordinate priests from the temple.

But the amazing sight was Hakka, with a rifle held jauntily over his shoulder, and Kalo with the other.

On the high priest's crafty face there was a look of exultation as he strode into the plaza.

The spearmen filed aside, permitting Hakka and Kalo to approach within twenty-five yards of the doomed boys.

"Whee! Don't the scoundrel feel great now?" choked Bob.

"My children," cried Hakka, raising his voice, "have no more fear of any white devils. I have learned how they make the lightning. I can make it myself. I will show you. For, instead of the torment of gold, I shall destroy both of these young white devils with their own lightning!"

Kalo had ranged himself close to Hakka, holding the other rifle.

Now, with all eyes upon him, Hakka raised the rifle, aiming straight at Jack's breast.

Crack! Jack Hartley had gotten the drop. He had fired first.

From the amazed Hakka came a yell of pain.

The rifle fell from his hands, while he shook aloft his right hand, from which the thumb had been shot clean off.

For just a moment the populace stood awed with horror.

Then a loud, desperate cry went swiftly up:

"Kill the white devils who have profaned the sacred body of our high priest! Else our island will be destroyed! Kill! Tear the white youths to pieces!"

Hardly a twinkling! Then the frantic crowd, the spearmen leading them, rushed in to destroy the Americans.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE MERCY OF FANATICS.

"Get those guns, Bob!"

But Jack had spoken too late to be heard.

His chum was already darting forward like mad.

Jack followed, covering Brewster's advance with the revolver ready.

Crack! A spearman who made a lunge at Bob went down, breathing his last.

That gave Bob breathing time.

He snatched up the rifle dropped by the high priest.

Crack! Jack's last shot sped at Kalo, who had raised the other rifle to shoot our hero.

The right arm of the deputy high priest hung helpless, the rifle slipping to the ground.

And Jack darting in, got it and raised it.

Almost at the muzzles of the rifles that the boys leveled were the spearmen.

One of these fellows raised his spear, intent on running Jack through.

Crack! It was the last of that spearman. Bob shot another at arm's length.

There was no missing at such range.

"Kill them! Kill them! They have profaned Hakka and Kalo! They must die!"

Plainly the fight of the mob was up, regardless of consequences.

"Shall we fall back, firing?" quavered Bob.

"Not on your life! Stand your ground! The second you retreat you'll be run over! Stand, and kill everything in front of you!"

Cr-r-r-rack! Both rifles rang out until the magazines were exhausted.

Half a score of Wahitite men lay on the ground dead or wounded.

It was savage work, but it was being done in self-defense.

And now the crowd fell back just a bit, awed, but not with all the fight gone.

The leaders among those spearmen wanted to take counsel with each other and plan a new style of attack.

Swift as thought the boys jammed in fresh cartridges from the boxes that Hakka and Kalo had dropped in their wild flight from the scene of carnage.

"They've got us, easy as winking, if their nerve holds out," whispered Brewster.

"Their nerve will hold out," Jack predicted. "We've hit their religion at last, and any people on earth will fight like fury for their religion. They'll get us, but we'll have the fun of going down gamely. How many cartridges do you think you have left?"

"Must be fifty, without looking to count."

"About the same here. Bob, stand with your back to mine, so we can look both ways."

"What do you think their scheme will be?"

"I know what mine would be, if I was on the other side," Jack replied. "I'd put men up on those buildings over there to hurl spears. Those fellows can throw them far enough."

"That's what they'll do," chattered Bob. "Can't we get out of this?"

"Into that mob beyond?" Jack demanded, scornfully.

Blocking both of the approaches to the plaza stood the unarmed part of the mob.

These, with the men in front, but with the women pressing closely behind, called clamorously to the spearmen to wind up the "white devils."

"If we try to go through them," Jack argued, "we'll get at too close quarters. They'll turn on us and drag us down."

"Then we'll stay here and hope for luck?" asked Bob.

"That, and kill anything that gets too near for our

comfort. There! What did I tell you? There goes about half of the spearmen, and the crowd is letting them through. They'll go around to the other side of the buildings. We'll soon be dodging scores of spears from the roof-tops."

"Good-by, then," said Bob, coolly, "if we don't have another chance to talk in this world!"

Jack's hand sought that of his chum.

They gave each other a silent pressure as they stood there back to back.

Crack! Jack was busy. He had fired at the first spearman to show himself on a roof opposite.

It was a good aim. The fellow dropped.

"That may keep 'em lying low for a while," chuckled Hartley, grimly. "Not for long, though."

But now a new clamor arose out among the unarmed members of the mob.

The blasts of conch-shell horns were heard, and then the crowd parted—sullenly but respectfully.

Into the plaza, on her royal litter, rode the Princess Zendra, half-sitting, half-kneeling.

Behind her litter came a few score of spearmen.

"Cease, my people!" shouted the princess in the native dialect.

Then to the boys, in English, she added the command:

"Throw down your strange weapons, you barbarians!"

"Nit!" growled Bob.

That was the way Jack himself felt about it, but our hero, merely lowering the muzzle of his rifle, called out:

"The Princess Zendra can approach in safety. We wish to talk with her before we destroy all her people. We shall not harm her, nor shall we harm her people, if they themselves come to their senses."

More than a score of the spearmen on the roof-tops had raised themselves, standing in plain view.

But they no longer held their spears, for which reason the boys made no move to fire upon them.

"Throw down your weapons, you barbarians!" commanded Zendra.

Jack eyed her, speaking with a big tinge of irony:

"When we have learned to have a better idea of your people, princess, we shall be glad to obey. But not now, when you have so many ugly spearmen about."

"Let me down," Zendra commanded her litter-bearers.

They sank to their knees. From the courtiers standing behind the princess Erma came gliding forward to help her royal mistress to the ground.

"Come, my good Erma," smiled Zendra, "we will show my people that we do not fear the white devils."

"But let no one else dare come near or attempt to raise a weapon," Jack called out, warningly.

Straight onward came Zendra, looking fearlessly at the two young Americans.

Erma, on the other hand, flushing and paling in turn, seemed reluctant to advance.

"Surely, Erma, after what you have told me, you need not fear," chaffed the smiling princess.

Zendra halted, hardly arm's length away from our hero.

"You have been bold," she said, coldly.

"So should all men be when they are threatened with torment or death," Jack answered coldly.

"You have slain my people," she went on, reproachfully.

"We're even, then," Jack retorted. "They were doing their best to kill us."

"But you have defied me, their ruler!"

"How? In wishing to live?"

Zendra bit her lip, flushing a trifle, then scowling.

But Jack, though the desire to take her in his arms was stronger than any other feeling, determined that the only safe way would be to make himself master of the situation and to remain so.

"Princess Zendra," he went on, firmly, "you have now to choose between two courses. One is that you decide to be my enemy. Then we shall destroy your people. Wahitite shall be no more.

"The other course is to make yourself our friend. If you do that you must be our loyal friend at all times—in everything. Then will we be your staunch friends and servants at every moment of the day. Then we will serve you in everything and defend you against all dangers. We must be either friends or enemies. Which shall it be?"

"You may come to my park with me," Zendra replied, slowly, after thinking. "You shall go there in safety. You have my promise of that! Then we shall consult with Hakka and with Kalo and decide what shall be done."

"That won't do!" Hartley clicked, promptly. "We know already just what kind of a friend Hakka is likely to be. We don't trust him. We will have nothing to do with him."

"But I must consult with Hakka," persisted Zendra, firmly. "He is the high priest and my adviser. I can take no important step without him."

"Then the office of high priest and adviser is abolished from this instant!" dared Jack.

Zendra stared at him in amazement.

"What mean you?" she almost faltered.

"We have our lightning-making tools once more, princess. If you hold Hakka between you and me I will command this strange weapon, and Hakka, wherever he be, shall drop dead on the instant. And thereafter whoever takes up the office of the high priest shall drop dead at the instant that he becomes high priest!"

Princess Zendra heard, gasping incredulously.

"You have not such power!" she called, doubtfully.

"Put me to the test, then," begged Jack. "Say the word, and I promise you that, no matter how fast your messenger runs, he shall find Hakka dead when he reaches him. Also Kalo! Now, do you dare me?"

As Jack sprung this prodigious bit of bluff he rested one finger lightly on the trigger of his rifle.

"I am awaiting your command," he said, quietly.

Princess Zendra was fighting a battle within herself.

Jack Hartley eyed her searchingly. Bob, with his back to that of his chum, could merely guess what was happening.

"It is almost the last chance, princess," Jack insisted, presently. "Is it so hard to choose between having us for friends or for enemies? Or have you some secret grudge against Hakka and Kalo, and do you wish them destroyed at once? If so, your people must be destroyed with them."

Princess Zendra caught her breath in a choking gasp.

"Come! Choose! The time has come," our hero insisted, warningly.

Again the princess caught her breath.

"Be my friends," she pleaded, faintly.

"To be that, princess, we must also be your advisers in many things. To Hakka and Kalo confide the religion of your people, if you wish, but in the affairs of government we must be the advisers if we are to be your friends. Do you still wish us as friends?"

"Yes, since I must."

"Then, princess, be good enough to raise your voice, and tell your people waiting yonder that we are your friends and advisers, and that we must be respected, even obeyed, as such."

The royal girl's eyes flashed.

She seemed on the point of mutiny, because of Hartley's firm tone.

"Tell your people," he commanded. "My patience is going fast. And you will never regret having us for your friends and loyal servants."

Once more Zendra fought the struggle within herself.

Then her voice rose, faltering a trifle at first, yet gaining in strength and sweetness as she went on:

"My people, these are no white devils, but powerful friends."

"No, no!" came a sullen, beast-like growl from the mob.

"I say that they are our friends," cried Zendra, half-angrily. "Who dares dispute me?"

No words came from the mob now, only sullen mutterings.

"They are my friends, as well as the friends of my people," the princess resumed. "They promise to defend us against all harm, and you have seen that they are powerful to do it. These strangers come not as robbers, but as friends. I command you to respect them as my friends and advisers. Whoever strikes at either of these strangers kills his sovereign. I have spoken!"

There was a short, stupefied pause.

Then slowly, sullenly, a few scores of the people sank down to their knees.

As Zendra stood looking out firmly, proudly over the assembled multitude, others and yet others sank to their knees.

Before a minute had passed even the spearmen were on their knees, the heads of their weapons turned to the ground.

"It is well!" cried Zendra. "You are still my people!"

Then to Jack she added:

"You need have no fear now. You are safe anywhere, even without your terrible weapons."

"But we don't part with the guns just the same," uttered Bob under his breath.

"Now," continued the princess, "I shall send for litter-bearers and you shall ride behind my litter to my park. There we will provide a house for you."

"Thank you, but I don't care for a litter," Bob replied, after a short, sidelong glance at Erma.

"It is needless, princess, since we have so short a distance to go," Jack added.

To our hero's astoundment Zendra replied:

"Then I shall dismiss my own litter. Until my people understand better, it is safer that I walk with you."

Now, all in a twinkling, things had changed.

Spearmen formed for the royal escort.

Jack walked at Zendra's side, Bob just behind them with Erma.

Yet both boys kept their rifles in readiness as a guard against treachery.

But the people, by their profoundly respectful greetings to their young sovereign as she passed slowly down the street, proved also that their anger against the Americans had been subdued.

So the foremost of the spearmen lined up on either side of the main gate to the royal park as Zendra and her suite passed through into the park.

Calling one of her servitors, she bade him conduct the boys to a low white building that stood not far from the center of the park.

It was a one-story, one-roomed affair, the room being some twenty by thirty feet inside.

Here there were tables and seats and couches made of woven grasses.

It was a cool, sweet, wholesome-looking residence.

As the two boys passed inside their guide stepped back.

"Say," uttered Jack, after closing the door, "this place is all right."

"But look at the narrow slits for windows."

"All the better," Hartley replied. "We could defend this place like a fort, if we had to. It gives me more respect for Princess Zendra's honesty of intention. I believe she thought of our defense when she gave us this dwelling."

"Why, after shutting that wooden door, and bolting it, we could safely go to sleep at the same time," Bob went on as he explored. "Any one trying to force a way in here would wake us up with the noise he made."

"I've already told you," emphasized Jack, "that I think the princess means to use us squarely. She meant to in the first place, too, I believe, but Hakka overran her intentions. Now she has seen what happened to that scoundrel, and she's come over to our side once more."

There was a tap, and servants entered with water, a species of vegetable soup, and long white robes.

"Whee! Don't those things look good?" gasped Hart-

ley, rapturously. "Bob, it's a month since we've had a bath or a change of clothing."

They made up for it then and there.

Then, an hour later, clean and well-garbed in the clean, sweet gowns of the Wahitite gentlemen, the boys sallied forth.

Yet they carried their rifles, and had a supply of cartridges in pouches under their clothing.

Some of the members of the Princess Zendra's household were walking in the park or resting on the cool grass.

The princess was not in sight, but Erma, from a distant corner of the park, came hastening toward Bob.

They greeted each other, and then Brewster proposed that they stroll together.

"Don't get too far away from me, Bob," warned Hartley, in a low tone. "Remember that we're hanging on here by our teeth."

So Bob was cautious, even though he did get just far enough away for Erma and himself to carry on their own conversation without others to hear.

"Am I to lose a faithful maid, that your friend may have a sweet wife?" sounded a laughing voice behind our hero.

Turning with a start, Jack beheld the princess.

"Bob is lucky," he murmured. "I wish that I might succeed as well in my own love affairs."

"Ah! Then you have been looking at another of my maids?" demanded Zendra, laughingly.

"At one of your maids?" Jack repeated. "No!"

Then, though not meaning to, our hero looked at the princess so pointedly that she colored, then grew white as marble.

"After all," she said, coldly, "your love affairs are not my concern."

It was all the stab Jack Hartley needed to bring him to his senses.

"You have not heard how I happened in the square in time to save you," she went on, coolly, a moment later.

"No, princess. Unless you came to see the torment, or the execution."

"It was because Erma, fearing she had played me false, confessed what she had tried to do. Then I went to the square out of curiosity," Zendra announced, in a matter-of-fact way.

Her every tone and look made the boy realize that she was princess, and that he, at best, was but little better than common clay.

Then, as he looked at Bob and Erma, talking and laughing happily, the boy sighed again.

He turned to speak to Princess Zendra

She had gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOSS OF THE SITUATION.

-Yet, in all except his love affairs, Jack Hartley, as the weeks sped by, had his own way.

Hakka, whose wounded hand had healed, remained as high priest, but ceased to be the general adviser.

Hakka took the change badly, as did Kalo, who also was now over his wound.

But Jack's position had grown more solid every day.

Always respectful to the Princess Zendra, and making no further open attempt to win her affection, he had succeeded in greatly pleasing her with his advice in other respects.

In the first place he had taken an active interest in the crude native methods of extracting the gold from the ore.

As the people used much gold in their own adornment and in the decorating of their temples, the reduction in the amount of labor earned for the boys many friends among the gold-workers.

Then, too, our hero had succeeded in persuading Princess Zendra to make the penalties of the law less severe among the minor offenders.

Erma's father had been pardoned.

The people of Wahitite soon learned that many of their new advantages came through the new adviser of the princess.

Jack and Bob went up swiftly in popular liking. The people even became more devoted to their fair young sovereign, if that were possible.

Only the followers of Hakka, who now numbered but a few scores of men, now hated the young Americans.

Hakka's hate amounted to but little.

He was still supreme in the crude religion of these people, though in the other affairs of the island he had little to say.

Best of all, it no longer was necessary for the boys to carry their rifles about with them.

Even Hakka was now convinced that only one who had been born to the art could handle the lightning-makers with safety.

So, with the rifles and ammunition safely locked away, Jack and Bob went where they pleased, unharmed and not afraid.

Yet Jack, who had found some more revolver cartridges among his effects first brought from the bark, always carried a loaded revolver simply as a wise precaution.

"You're boss of the situation now, if you're ever going to be," Bob said to our hero, as they sat on the grass in the park one day. "Now, why don't you go in and make the three-base run for the princess herself."

"The fence is up," smiled Jack. sadly.

"Then pull it down."

"How easy that sounds."

"You can do it."

"Haven't I tried?"

"Have you?" demanded Bob, looking curiously at his chum. "How hard?"

"Oh, as hard as ever I knew how," Hartley sighed, wretchedly. "But, though I'm accepted freely as a good adviser, I'm common clay, and Zendra is a princess descended from heaven."

"Rot! She's too bright a girl to believe anything like that."

"At least she has to keep her people believing it. That's where she gets her power over them."

"Then you'll have to be a young white deity, too," Bob persisted.

"Do you think I'm going to fool Zendra with that?" smiled Jack, bitterly.

"Say, if you could only fool the people themselves, you might not have as hard a task with the princess."

"Bob, the plain truth is, she doesn't care a whiff about me. I'm a convenience, that's all."

"How do you know?"

"The right fellow for Zendra hasn't arrived yet."

"And you never will arrive," blurted Bob, "unless you wake up and force her to see that the right fellow has arrived and can't be stayed off."

Jack smiled again.

"There she is now," whispered Bob, looking in the direction of the princess's own residence. "She's walking alone, too, for a wonder. Now, sail in and win. You've got to if you care for the girl. Remember, she's only a human being. Now hustle in and win!"

Jack turned, casting a longing look in the direction of the fair young ruler of Wahitite.

"Go in and win!" egged Bob.

"Hang it, I'll sail in—even if it's to my death," vented Jack.

He rose, straightening out.

"Watch your eyes," whispered Bob, regarding his chum anxiously. "Soften up a bit. Those eyes are too full of purpose just now. You'll warn the girl and give her a chance to fight back. There, that's better—that look. Now! Skip!"

Zendra stood looking down at some flowers in an oval bed as Jack gained her side under the shade of a great tree.

"You are looking at me very closely," said the royal girl as Jack gained her side.

"Yes, princess."

"Why?"

"I was wondering."

"Are you going to tell me what about?"

"There is a question I would like to ask you about yourself, princess, if you won't be offended," Jack began, lamely.

"How can I tell until you ask?" she smiled back at him.

Thus encouraged, our hero asked:

"Princess, all your people are brown, while your own skin is white. May I ask how that happens?"

"You should ask the priests," she smiled, meaningly.

"They would tell me that you came direct from the heavens."

"And would you dare dispute it?" she demanded, smiling, but with a warning look.

But Jack had now gone so far that he was prepared to plunge boldly in.

"Princess, a white daughter must be born of white parents. Your mother must have been white."

"All of our sovereigns have been white-skinned," the girl answered, coolly.

"Then your father, too, must have been white-skinned. And you speak English—a language unknown even to Hakka. So your father must have been either an American or an Englishman."

"I have never heard of such people," Zendra replied. "Do they live on islands of their own like this?"

"The Americans and the English are great nations, numbering millions of people. I am one of the Americans. Your island would be lost in one small corner of my great country. Do you remember your father?"

"I never saw him," Zendra replied, with a slight shudder.

"But your mother, then, must have learned my language from your father."

"So she told me," Zendra assented.

"Zendra," cried the boy, forgetting himself and the girl's title, "your sovereigns of this island have never mated with the natives, but always with a white man. Thus you have kept the strain of white blood pure. Where these white men came from I do not know. They must have been shipwrecked here, like myself."

"Why do you speak of yourself?" she asked, coolly.

"Zendra, I can't keep back the words an instant longer, even though the look in your eyes kills me. You must mate with a white man one of these days. I am white-skinned—and I love you, Zendra! Can you not love me enough to take me as your husband?"

The whole matter was out now. Jack could not take back what he had said, nor would he ever again cease in his efforts to win this girl—never, at least, unless she chose and wedded some one else in his place.

But the princess had drawn back, her face very pale.

She eyed him angrily, witheringly.

"You are more insolent than I had supposed," she observed, freezingly.

"Is it impudent, then, for an honest young man to tell a girl that he loves her—that he hungers for her as his wife?" demanded Hartley.

He spoke in a low tone, but at white heat.

"It is insolence for you to dare to think of wedding me," she retorted, stabbingly.

"Then I am impudent," cried Jack, boldly, "and I shall always be so until you no longer think of it in that light."

"Stop at once!" she commanded, haughtily.

"I cannot."

"You must."

"Zendra, having spoken, I shall never be still again on this subject. I shall speak of it at every chance."

"You dare defy me?"

"I dare love you," he cried, hotly.

"Then obey me."

"Love does not obey," retorted the boy. "It masters."

Zendra bit her lip, remaining silent.

But they were looking searchingly into each other's eyes now.

Poor Jack! In her hostile eyes he read no hope that the answer could ever be different.

"You cannot do without me," he went on, briskly.

"Then you threaten to withdraw your help from me?"

"I? Threaten you, Zendra! What nonsense!"

"Yet you speak as if I might have to get on without you."

"You can't, and I never will. You will need me more and more, and the day will come soon, if not now, when you will find that you need me as your husband."

"It is impossible," replied the girl, firmly. "In this, if in nothing else, you must obey me."

"Haven't I told you that love can't obey? That love must always master? Zendra, my love must master you as it has mastered me!"

"Speak of this no more, or I shall leave you. I shall avoid you."

"Having spoken, I won't speak again just now of my love," Jack agreed, though without weakening.

Zendra quickly changed the subject.

Jack did not attempt to get back to it at this time. But he had broken the ice for good. Zendra should be his, if it took him years to win her.

"Well?" asked Bob curiously later.

"I've made the start," Jack smiled, sadly.

"How far did you get?"

"As far as the refusal, and a little past it."

"Any sign of winning?"

"Every sign but one points the other way."

"And what is that one sign?"

"My resolution never to accept anything but a winning."

"Did the princess forbid you to speak to her of love again?"

"She did just that. But I warned her that I should speak of it often until she changed her mind."

"And she didn't try to push you off the earth?"

"Not quite as bad as that."

"Good!" uttered Bob. "Then things are going well enough for a starter. But don't let the iron get cold!"

"Trust me. I won't!"

Bob was the first to awake, with a start, the next morning.

Some one was hammering at the door of their house.

Yet it was not a heavy blow that was being struck.

"Who's there?" hailed Brewster, while Jack awoke and sat up on his couch.

"The Princess Zendra. Make haste. I need you."

"Your chance, old fellow," throbbed Bob, wheeling around. "Hustle. The princess needs you. Don't keep her waiting. Let her see how useful and prompt you can be when she's troubled."

But Jack did not need the advice.

A few quick splashes in water, and he slipped into his robe.

The Princess Zendra stood some twenty feet from the door when he opened it.

The first look was enough to tell him that she was in real trouble.

"What is wrong?" he asked, softly, going up to her side.

"Our enemies have come back," she answered tremulously.

"Enemies? Come back?" he repeated, opening his eyes wide.

"True, you have not heard before of our enemies. Yet, have you never wondered how we learned to dread the lightning-makers?"

"Oh! Then you are sometimes annoyed by armed thieves, after the gold that this island produces?"

"Once a year they come," replied Zendra.

"White men?"

"They are not like my people, and yet they are not as white-skinned as yourself," Zendra answered. "They are, perhaps, about as brown as Erma."

"What do they call themselves?"

"Their leader names himself Alvarez."

"Spaniards, eh?" clicked Jack. "And where do they come from?"

"From somewhere out in the world beyond. They come, perhaps twenty in number. Each carries a lightning-maker like yours. But on their vessel they have other larger and different lightning-makers. With the larger ones they can even hurl a bolt from their ship into this town. They did it once years ago, when my people tried to fight them back."

"Cannon. And robbers," thought Jack. "Pirates, then. Whew! What a rich harvest they must have been reaping from these people."

"We call such people pirates out in the world beyond," Jack hurried on. "You have always paid their demands?"

"We have paid them much tribute in gold once a year. And sometimes they have carried some of our maidens away with them, too. But now they send word that we must give them ten times as much gold as we did last year."

"The cheeky thieves!" uttered Jack, indignantly. "But where are they now?"

"At the western beach, where you came ashore. They are bringing ashore two of the bigger lightning-makers," confessed Zendra, tremblingly. "We must give them all the gold they demand, and at once, or they threaten to destroy us all."

"By bombardment," explained Jack to Bob, who had come up and was listening. "Then, princess, these pirates have not yet left the beach?"

"An hour ago, when my messengers saw them last, they had not left the beach."

"Princess, will your people follow me in battle against these pirates?" Jack demanded, looking hard at her.

"But the lightning!" she faltered. "That will destroy them."

"It will not be as bad if I am leading them," Jack replied, coolly. "True, some of your people may perish in the battle, but not all. And we shall wipe out these pirates forever. They will never leave the island alive, and so they will never annoy you again."

"Can this be done?" asked the princess, eagerly.

"If your spearmen will be brave, and follow where they are led. If they dare to fight on to the death this island will never be troubled again."

"But the lightning?"

"That will not be as dangerous, since we know how to fight the lightning. Zendra, it all depends upon the bravery and obedience of your spearmen. If they will obey me to the death——"

"They will when they have my command," she pledged, eagerly.

"How many spearmen have you?"

"In all, eight hundred."

"And about two hundred of these can be summoned within the next ten minutes?"

"Even so."

"Then, Zendra, listen, for now I must take command and give even you my instructions. Get all your spearmen together as quickly as possible. The first two hundred I will lead up into the hills after you have exhorted them to stand by me in battle. Bob, you will wait here and hurry up with the rest of the spearmen as soon as they are mustered. Zendra, give your orders as quickly as you can."

The princess clapped her hands. Attendants who had waited beyond the nearby bushes hastened up.

To them Zendra gave her orders.

Almost at once messengers were scurrying in every direction.

Not more than ten minutes later fully two hundred of the men of this little island's army were gathered before the gate of the park.

To them Zendra made her appeal, urging them to follow their American leaders even into the jaws of certain death.

"Do that," Jack shouted aloud, "and, even though some of your number perish, the strangers shall be slain and your island, your sovereign and your families shall be safe after this. Will you follow me—to the death—for your princess?"

"For the Princess Zendra—yes!" came back the strong shout.

"Then forward—now!"

Jack, with his rifle and revolver, placed himself at their head, sending out a half-dozen of the fleetest, however, to hasten on ahead and to make sure that the approach of the pass through the crest of the hill was still open.

Just one farewell wave of his hand Jack Hartley sent back to the troubled royal girl.

Then, all soldier, he thought no more of the girl, but of her business that he had gone forth on.

By hurrying his men most of the time at a trot Jack, within forty-five minutes, was at the crest.

His own men could still command the pass, for down on the distant beach the presumed Spaniards were just starting inland.

Twenty-three men Jack counted.

From the shoulder of each one flashed the sun's rays on steel rifle barrels.

But what took his eye first was the fact that they dragged after them two small cannon, mounted on wheels.

"They'll be here in a little more than half an hour," throbbed the boy. "Oh, if I can only depend on these spearmen, we'll wipe that scoundrelly crew off of the earth!"

Out beyond the approaching force his gaze had already taken in a trim-looking little schooner that lay at anchor fully three miles out.

"Can you see any one on the decks of that craft?" he demanded of one of his keen-eyed spearmen.

"No one," replied the man, after a long look.

"It'll be the grandest kind of luck if we've caught the whole outfit ashore!" throbbed the boy, other wild plans flashing into his head.

But now he must busy himself with meeting the on-coming Spaniards, if such they were.

"Men," he shouted, "you have heard what your princess commanded. I am going to hide you up on these rocks that look down over the pass. Once hidden, not a man of you must rise until the order is given. When you get that order then leap down into the pass and use your spears on those of the enemy nearest to you. Make sure that everyone of them is killed. Now I will lead you to your places among the rocks. Make sure that you do not show yourselves until the command comes."

In ten minutes the spearmen, all of them plainly nervous, had been well hidden.

Just around the turn of the pass Jack had stationed the last thirty of his men to dispatch any of the enemy who might fight their way through the pass.

His preparations made, Jack gazed back into the valley.

Down in the main town he saw the rest of the spearmen gathering, preparatory to being marched up here by Bob.

Into Jack's face as he watched the small column below—watched them from a spot of concealment that he had found—there came a grim, almost terrible look.

"It was a man with Spanish blood in his veins who robbed and murdered my father," he gritted. "That man, Gonzales, whom I followed for six weeks, only to lose all trail of him! That scoundrel with whom I shall always have the debt of blood until I have paid it! If these are really Spaniards that are coming now it will make the battle a sweeter one to me!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE REAL "DEVILS" COME.

From where he lay, concealed among the rocks at the very beginning of the pass, Jack Hartley watched the slow approach of the pirates.

He knew, from his own messengers, that Bob had just started with the hundreds more of reinforcing spearmen.

"If the natives ever hear those cannon go off at close quarters, it will be all up for us," throbbed the boy.

So the time passed in anxious doubt until the invaders, moving slowly but steadily, had gotten the head of their little column within three hundred yards of the beginning of the ambushed pass.

"Para!" bellowed their leader, holding up his hands.

"Para?" That's Spanish for 'halt,' "muttered Jack. "So they're going to send men ahead to explore the pass? That'll make my plan a harder one."

Then suddenly Jack Hartley received such a shock that he almost leaped to his feet.

For five men had come forward to reconnoiter the pass—and our hero knew their leader.

"Gonzales!" he throbbed, turning almost sick with hate and purpose. "My father's slayer! So we shall meet—now!"

In a flash Jack's rifle came forward until it rested ready for instant use.

He had forgotten everything in that mad instant except the chance to wipe out his debt to the scoundrel who was fast approaching him.

"They're pirates, sure enough, when that fellow Gonzales is among them," uttered the boy, savagely. "How can it chance that he has turned up here, of all strange corners of the earth? And yet it is not strange—for Gonzales is always to be found where gold may be had through crime."

"Cautiously, in the pass, my good fellows," Jack heard Gonzales say to the men with him.

Gonzales himself carried in his right hand a revolver ready for instant use.

Nearer to the edge of the rock Hartley crept, his eyes shining strangely, his rifle clutched more firmly than ever.

It was an impulse to take vengeance into his own hands, an impulse of which he would be ashamed later on.

But now as he watched and as Gonzales came closer and closer, Jack waited like the cat ready to spring.

At last! Gonzales was within fifteen feet of him, and not more than a dozen feet below the ledge on which our hero crouched.

Suddenly, like a flash, Hartley sprang up to his knees, the rifle raised.

Crack! But Jack's well aimed bullet went wild.

For just at that moment his feet slipped from under him.

Betrayed by crumbling rock at the edge of the ledge, Jack fairly slipped and could not recover himself.

Down the rocky slope he slid, dropping his rifle in his frantic efforts to save himself.

The Spaniards at that useless shot had started back, on the defensive.

But now the voice of Gonzales rang out mockingly:

"Well, my good fellows, why do you flinch at the sight of one enemy who has lost his gun. Pounce on him, and we shall get useful information from him."

Ere Jack, half-dazed, could leap up and recover his rifle, two of the enemy were upon him.

Above, on the ledge, all was still among the spearmen. Jack wondered for an instant if they had lost their nerve and decamped.

"Yank him to his feet," commanded Gonzales, peering forward.

Then the two as Jack was hauled up got a fair look at each other.

Now Gonzales started back in earnest, his face growing livid.

"Hartley!" he choked.

"As you see," quavered Jack.

"Back with him, my good fellows, or we shall find that pass our grave!" uttered the wretch, himself turning to run. "Whenever a Gonzales and a Hartley meet there must be danger."

Back to the main column ran Gonzales, in advance of the four who dragged Jack along with them.

Hearing the single rifle shot, those behind with the main column had already dragged the cannon forward into place.

"The day's lost to us!" gritted Jack, despairingly. "And I'm certainly lost to myself at the same time!"

"What a stroke!" yelled Gonzales, sneeringly, as Jack's captors dragged him up before the cannon. "To save my own life, and to have my enemy's life delivered into my hands."

"Then you know him, Gonzales?" demanded the leader of the pirates.

"Know him?" repeated Gonzales, with a harsh laugh. "As I knew his father before him—to slay him!"

CHAPTER X.

JACK PAYS HIS RED SCORE.

As the ruffian uttered his veiled threat he drew from inside his shirt a bright-bladed poignard.

"You are the serpent that I must behead before I am stung," hissed the fellow.

As he leaped forward at the boy the two men who were still holding him let go.

Flop! Springing aside, Jack also darted back, all but turning a somersault in his effort to avoid that steel point.

"Catch him! Don't let him get away!" screamed Gonzales.

Crack! Jack's revolver came into sight.

Gonzales dropped right there in his tracks, wounded through the right chest.

Then a few shots rang out as Jack, zig-zagging, made his way swiftly back to the pass.

"Come on, my spearmen!" he shouted. "Now rush in and save your princess! Charge!"

Bravely the almost naked brown men responded. Down the slopes they slid into the pass.

Recovering from their first stupor, the pirates fired desperately.

Yet in firing rapidly they fired recklessly.

Fifty spearmen, Jack at their head, swarmed out of that pass, charging straight upon the pirates' guns.

Boom! went one of the cannon.

But the natives had swiftly deployed into a thin skirmish line as they ran.

Not one of them was injured by the cannon's discharge.

Here and there one of them dropped before a rifle shot.

"Charge! Wipe the scoundrels out!" Jack shouted.

Bullets zipped by his own ears, but he escaped unscathed.

Now the spearmen, nearly all of whom had gotten into action, were engaged hand-to-hand with the pirates.

A great war-yell, and Bob's reinforcements began to swarm through the pass and out upon the plain beyond.

It was soon over.

Several of the pirates, losing heart, started to rush back to the beach.

But these Wahititans, better runners than their enemies, quickly overhauled and dispatched the fugitives.

Here and there a cry for mercy was heard.

Jack, already sick of the carnage, tried to hold his now mad spearmen in. He tried to compel them to take prisoners.

But the natives were past such control. They butchered wherever they found a foe, fighting or not.

In ten minutes the last of the pirates had been slain.

Jack and Bob, wandering over the scene on which they did not command for the time being, came upon the body of Gonzales, thrust through more than a score of times by spear-thrusts.

"I'm glad I didn't kill him now," shuddered Jack. "It was left for others to do that for me. But I'm glad he's dead, anyway."

"Who was he?" Bob demanded.

"My father's partner in a smelting laboratory down in Arizona. My father would have been rich but for the stealings of this scoundrel. And when my father tried to force an accounting Gonzales murdered him. For weeks I tried hard to track Gonzales down, but he got away from me. To-day I had the vengeance madness come over me again for a while. But the shot from my weapon that struck him was fired in self-defense. I'm glad of that."

"How came he with this crew?"

"No one will ever know now. These men knew of the island and its gold. They banded together and came here once a year for gold. During the year they spent their stealings on riotous living. Then they came back to plunder these poor natives further. That much we can guess. I doubt if we shall ever know more."

"These men don't all seem like Spaniards," hinted Brewster.

"No; I've noticed that. They're like all pirates—the scum sweepings of many different nations. But, Bob, do you see that schooner?"

"Can I take my eyes off of it?" demanded Brewster.

"Gather twenty men or so, take both rifles and some from these pirates and go alongside. I believe the schooner is deserted. But, in any case, seize her."

Bob, with a whoop, darted off to corral enough of his men.

"Better take a hundred men with you, come to think of it," yelled Jack after him. "We can spare them as well as not."

As well as not, certainly, since now there were no enemies on shore left to fight.

The Wahititans were plundering the clothing of the pirates.

But Jack saw sternly to it that all of the firearms of the pirates were gathered and stacked together.

"You men know better than to trifle with the lightning-makers," he hinted, grimly, to the spearmen.

That was sufficient to keep them from showing any curiosity over the firearms.

Sitting down in the shade, Hartley watched the progress of Bob's column towards the beach.

Then he saw Bob enter one of the boats with a few of his men.

"Blazes!" uttered Jack, disgustedly. "I ought to have gone along. I forgot that these people of Wahitite don't know how to row a boat. Bob will have to do the whole job of rowing."

Yet, as he watched, our hero saw that Brewster had thought of a better scheme.

The flash of the sun on six oars showed that Bob was giving a lesson in rowing.

"They're apt pupils, too, these big brown men," Jack cried, admiringly. "Jupiter, they'll be oarsmen soon."

Now one of the long-boats started for the schooner.

It was a long row, with these green oarsmen. It was two hours before our hero beheld the little craft alongside the schooner.

Then slowly something white fluttered up to the schooner's foretop.

"O. K.," clicked Jack. "Bob will stay there until he gets further orders. So I may as well lead these people back to town."

The rifles and the captured ammunition were carried, and the cannon dragged. The spearmen performed this part of the work reluctantly. Evidently they still dreaded to handle the lightning.

And well enough they might, for some twenty of their number had gone down in death before the bullets of the pirates. Some forty more were wounded.

At the rear of Jack's column the dead and wounded were brought along.

But all of Wahitite that had not been on the expedition was gathered on the plain below.

This our hero saw the instant that he crossed the hill-ridge and gazed down into the valley.

Two litter-bearers were already hastening up the inner slope.

The bearers and an escort were under one of Zendra's chiefs, a white-haired old man named Wanda.

Down on his knees, and then knocking his forehead thrice against the ground, went the old chief as he neared marching Jack Hartley.

"The princess sends her tenderest greeting to her best warrior," cried Wanda.

"I wish she really meant that," throbbed the boy, his pulses quickening for a moment. "But, pshaw! she showed me yesterday where I stand."

"But the other great warrior?" demanded Wanda, raising his eyes. "Can he have been slain by the white devils?"

"He has gone down and seized their ship, Wanda. We have slain the last of the enemy."

"So the messengers of the princess saw," replied Wanda. "Shall I wait here for your brother? For one litter is for you and the other for your brother."

"He may not be on shore to-day," Jack replied. "It can do no good to wait. Later I will send out a messenger to him."

"Be pleased, then, to enter your litter, oh favorite of the princess."

"If this fellow knew more about the truth," thought Jack, bitterly, as he placed himself on the litter, "he'd make me a happier fellow. Oh, Zendra, Zendra! May you never know what it is to want a mate and not to win that mate!"

The column—the "army" as Hartley called it grimly to himself—was now in motion again.

The people on the plain below were coming forward to meet the victors.

Men blew loudly on conch-shell horns. The women waved garlands of flowers, while the children sang, ran and capered.

At the head of the multitude was Zendra's litter, and on it the beautiful young sovereign herself.

Behind came the litters of Hakka, of Kalo and of a few of the sovereign's elder advisers.

"Hail to him who saved Wahitite!" roared the men.

"Hail to him who saved the princess and her people!" called the women in shrill gladness.

One hundred maidens, richly garlanded in flowers, came gliding past the princess's litter as it neared the head of the column.

"Halt!" called back Hartley. His long line of victors stood still in their tracks.

Zendra's litter stopped within twenty feet of our hero.

Hakka, Kalo and the others descended. Then Hakka assisted Zendra down to the ground.

Singing, the garlanded dancing maidens surrounded the little group, the people of Wahitite crowding as closely as they could.

The spearmen, having dropped out of the ranks, were now mingling with the crowd.

"Princess, your enemies of old will never bother you again," Jack announced, lifting his cap and bowing low.

Zendra took his hand.

"You have been a brave warrior," she said, sweetly. "Your deed shall never be forgotten. You may salute me."

Still retaining his hand within her own soft one, Zendra turned her cheek to him.

The meaning of the gesture was unmistakable.

"To kiss her!" throbbed Jack.

But still the princess presented only her cheek. He could not reach her lips without forcing her to turn her head.

"Your lips?" he whispered, daringly.

"My cheek!"

So Jack kissed her softly on the right cheek.

Nor did the onlookers seem surprised by what they beheld.

It was merely a mark of favor that the sovereign sometimes granted to those who had won her especial favor.

The dancing maidens had paused, for a few moments, both in their singing and in their movements. But now they resumed both, circling close.

"Look well upon these maidens," urged Zendra, in a low, cool voice. "Any one that pleases your eye you may take to wife."

But Jack Hartley did not turn his head.

"There is but one woman on earth that I want for a wife," he whispered.

"And she is not in Wahitite?" asked Zendra, half-mockingly.

"She is still holding my hand."

Like a flash, Zendra dropped the hand, recoiling with a slight flush.

"Warrior, you may disperse your men, after having ordered some to take in to town the spoils of war," she commanded.

She was the princess once more. Jack, however much of a favorite his deeds had made him, was still her inferior.

As Jack turned away with a sharp pain in his heart, he caught the wicked gaze of Hakka.

That worthy was staring meaningly at the boy.

Now quickly Hakka spoke to his litter-bearers. They knelt.

"Help me, good Kalo," cried Hakka, loudly.

As Kalo gave his arm the high priest of these people stepped upon his litter.

Still standing, his litter was raised to the shoulders of the bearers.

"Hear me!" roared Hakka.

In an instant every eye was turned in his direction.

Princess Zendra paled slightly. She looked at him, her lips firmly pressed together.

"My children," went on Hakka, in a deep voice that carried through the great crowd, "to-day we have witnessed many things and have gained new knowledge. But most important of all, we have learned that our own brave spearmen can face the lightning-makers of the white devils.

"True, we have lost a few warriors, but we have also destroyed the men behind the lightning-makers.

"My children, we no longer fear the strangers who carry the strange tools for making lightning. Never again will we obey such men, but destroy them. From your gods I bring this command: 'Kill all strangers who dare to do the work of the gods in making lightning. Kill them and thus win the favor of the gods!'"

"Hakka!" cried Princess Zendra, her lips white and trembling.

"Princess," replied the priest of these idolaters, solemnly, "at this moment even Zendra must listen and speak not. The gods of our ancestors speak through me, 'Kill all strangers who make lightning.'"

"Hakka," cried the princess, her voice shaking, "stop!"

"Not until I have seen the will of our gods obeyed," replied the old man, sternly.

Then to the nearest spearmen he shouted:

"Seize this impudent stranger who has kissed the cheek of your princess."

Instantly there was a rush forward.

Jack was apart from his rifle. His hand slipped in under his robe to reach for his pistol.

"But whom shall I kill?" he faltered. "Not Hakka, for I have learned that he is not a bad man, but only one who has been brought up to hate strangers."

Seized by a pair of hands at his left side, Jack was about to draw his weapon in one last desperate effort to defend himself.

"Stop! Back, all of you!" cried Zendra's angry voice. The spearmen fell back a step or two.

Zendra's face was white, her lips trembling.

"Princess," roared Hakka, "do not interfere with the will of our gods! Let the stranger be destroyed."

"Stop! Back, all of you, until your princess has been heard," insisted Zendra, fiercely. "Whatever the gods command, I have a right to be heard as well as Hakka. Listen to me, my people."

Once more Zendra had caught one of Jack's hands within her own.

Now she threw her head back proudly, her eyes flashing as she declared:

"Even the gods cannot unsay our ancient law that upon

whom your princess weds, his body and life shall be sacred. My people, I take this young stranger as my husband—as the fit mate of your princess. Respect him, obey him. On your knees before Zendra's mate!"

The effect was electrical. Zendra had, indeed, proclaimed the law of Wahitite.

As fast as the news traveled through the crowd the people fell on their knees, those who had the room even hitting their foreheads three times.

Kalo, even, was in the front ranks of the kneeling. Only the high priest remained, standing on his litter.

"Hakka," cried Zendra, sternly, "do you dare insult my free and precious choice?"

The old man murmured something, but Kalo rose and went toward him, helping him to the ground.

Stepping forward, as though in a daze, Hakka slowly sank to his knees, striking his forehead thrice to the soil.

"My eyes are open!" whispered Zendra, joyously, in Hartley's ear. "You spoke truly. Love masters. Oh, my love—my precious love!"

Then, to the still kneeling high priest, the girl cried:

"Make haste to your feet, oh, good Hakka! To your litter, thou servant of the gods. And I bid your men bear you straightway to the temple, that I may take this choice of my heart as my husband!"

CHAPTER XI.

A TOUGH END TO A HONEYMOON.

"I haven't waked up yet," sighed Jack, joyously.

It was the twenty-ninth day after his sudden wedding to Zendra in the temple.

Ever since then they had dwelt at the park.

The honeymoon had been one of the rarest happiness.

And on the day after the royal wedding Bob and Erma had been wedded.

Jack Hartley did not become, by virtue of his marriage, the ruler of Wahitite.

Zendra was still the sovereign, but Jack was accorded the highest honor by all, even by Hakka.

"I don't want to wake up," Brewster retorted, in answer to Jack's speech.

"Nor I. I am as happy as I can ever be."

"What about the United States?" asked Bob, suddenly.

"I don't even care much about going there—not for a long time, anyway."

"Just to think, old chap," Bob rambled on, "that we can have all the gold we want now, and that we can't spend a nickel's worth."

"I have followed my father's advice partly, anyway, Bob," smiled our hero.

"What was his advice?"

"Well, dad was a lonely old man. I don't remember my mother at all. The first that I remember of life was

that dad and I were wandering about from point to point through the west—mostly in Arizona and New Mexico.

"Dad was an expert assayer. The gold and silver miners had much for him to do. As dad and I were chums, I grew up in the laboratory with him.

"His great dream was to be wealthy—to own a great heap of real gold of his own. For he used to say to me: 'Jack, get out for the gold. Get all you can together. Gold is the only kind of power that never fails you, never tricks you. So get out for the gold. And I've trained you, Jack, so that you'll know the difference.'

"Well, you've sure got the gold," mused Bob, "even if you can't spend it."

"But I didn't get power through gold," laughed Jack. "My gold came through my power as Zendra's husband."

"Seems to me she has been moping a bit the last few days," uttered Bob, stubbornly.

Jack winced.

"You're right there, old fellow. She has been sad about something. And I can't find out what it is, either. Every time I ask her she turns away her head and looks as if she were going to cry. I haven't been unkind to her, old chap."

"Of course you haven't," Bob agreed, quickly. "You wouldn't know how."

"Here comes Zendra now," Jack murmured, tenderly. "Scoot, old chap!"

Obediently Bob rose and strolled away.

As Zendra reached his side Jack bent over and kissed her.

"I have been waiting and hoping you would come," he said.

"And I have feared to come," she answered, with a half-sobbing catch in her throat.

"What's that, Zendra?" the young man asked, quickly.

He forced her to look up into his eyes. Her own were suddenly wet with brimming tears.

"What on earth is the matter?" Jack gasped. "Zendra, come aside with me."

Taking her arm through his, he led the way to the little house in which he and Bob had once lived. It had been unoccupied ever since the boys married.

But now Jack pushed the door open and stood aside for Zendra to enter.

He followed her, pushing the door shut.

"Now, dear one," he began softly.

But Zendra threw herself on her knees, her falling hair touching the floor.

"Not that," cried Jack, hastily.

He raised her, clasping her. But she would not raise her face for the kiss.

"Wait until you have heard," she moaned. "Then you will hate me. And, while you hate, I shall beg you to destroy me."

"What on earth are you talking about, child?"

"Jack," she sobbed, "do you remember telling me once that love didn't obey, but mastered?"

"Do I?" murmured Hartley, dreamily. "Don't I? And love did master, didn't it, dear one?"

"Too well," she shuddered.

"Riddles again," cried Hartley, impatiently, though he ached to get at the cause of his young bride's grief.

For Zendra was shaking as if swayed by the storm.

"Listen to me. Drink in every word—and understand," Zendra went on, still without raising her face. "Had love obeyed, I would have wedded when first you asked it. But I dared not. I was strong, then, and made my love obey my reason."

"Then you loved me before that day you wedded me?" Jack throbbed.

"A long time before. But reason was strong, and I would not wed you. Then came the awful temptation, when I saw you about to be destroyed. Love mastered then, and my reason fell."

"Zendra, dear one," cried Hartley in sudden alarm, "you don't mean to tell me that you have learned to regret our wedding?"

"Only for your dear sake," she choked.

"Zendra, stop talking in riddles. Tell me quickly what you mean!"

"Let me out of your arms, then," she pleaded.

Like one in a dream Hartley let her go.

Zendra took two or three steps backward, and now she raised her eyes, looking straight into his.

"Jack," she murmured, heart-brokenly, "you did not know, and could not know, the law of our people. It would have been shameful death for whoever had told you. But there is a cruel law that relates to whoever among the white men shall wed the princess of Wahitite."

Jack stared.

"The law orders," she went on, chokingly, and her tears coming fast, "that on the thirtieth day after the wedding the white husband of the princess shall be put to death before the temple."

Again Zendra sank to her knees, her falling hair touching the floor.

For a few moments Jack looked at her speechlessly.

Then in two swift steps he was at her side, raising his bride firmly in his arms and holding her tight to him.

"You will be lonely, child, when I am gone," he said, gently, sadly.

Zendra raised her eyes to look at him searchingly.

"And is that all you feel, Jack? You do not hate me?"

"How can I? You have given me thirty days of happiness."

He bent and kissed her, not once, but many times.

"Do not think that I could blame you, child. You did all that was in your power. I cannot forget that at least you saved my life for a month, and that in the meantime you have made me happier than I ever dared to dream. And so, if this be the law of your people, and you are powerless to avert it——"

"I am—quite," she sobbed. "It is the law given us by

our gods, whom you do not worship. Though the princess, I cannot save you from Hakka."

"Hakka?" demanded the boy. "Hakka again!"

"Do not blame him. He is a good man, but bound by the will of the gods, as all on Wahitite are."

"Then let us be happy up to the last moment, dear one," Jack begged, kissing her once more. "Zendra, let me carry with me to the last moment the remembrance only of your smiles. I must not see a tear—not one—during the last few hours."

He tried to lead her to the door, but she hung back.

"Jack," she went on, in a dreary voice, "I want you to understand that I have done all in my power to keep this doom from you."

"Don't I know that, dear girl, without asking you?" he glowed back at her.

"In that first desperate moment, when love ruled and I chose you for my mate," she continued, "I did not stop to think beyond the moment. But ever since, knowing our law, and how unchangeable it is, I still tried—oh, how I tried!—to persuade Hakka and Kalo that the gods would not be angry if you lived. But Hakka, though he dislikes you no longer, insists that the law of the gods cannot be changed. Kalo, who would serve me if he could, is of the same opinion. And so, Jack, dearest, I cannot save you!"

"Brush those tears back," he cried, warningly. "Remember, smiles—not tears!"

"I must leave you for a few moments," she pleaded.

As Zendra went heavily away, her head bowed, Jack watched her in an agony of pain.

He closed his eyes as he stood there thinking.

Not a single hope of escape did he see.

True, he and Bob could still get at firearms and ammunition.

But, thanks to Hakka, these people of Wahitite no longer feared guns or pistols as things belonging to the infernal regions.

The spearmen would now, bravely enough, face a few firearms and rush in to win at the expense of losing a few of their number.

"Jack!" called Bob, in a tone of tremendous excitement from another part of the park.

Then, seeing our hero, he rushed breathlessly up, his face as pallid as it could be.

"What on earth does this all mean, Jack, old fellow?" Brewster demanded, gaspingly. "Hakka has all the spearmen of the nation posted around the park, and no one can go in or out. And Erma has fainted. What on earth does it mean, I say?"

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Four young people, racked by agony, had gathered in the former lodgings of the boys.

"There is not a bit of hope now," Zendra announced,

despairingly. "The spearmen being posted, Hakka may, at any moment, send in men to confine you between three walls and to keep strict guard over you until the hour for the sacrifice comes."

Brewster knew quite well that he would fall with Jack, that the two deaths would be within an hour of each other.

Yet in this crisis Bob was not thinking of himself more than of his chum.

They had reached the island together; they would leave it together—"by the sky route," Bob grimly observed.

"Zendra, is there any way of getting from here?" Jack quivered.

"If there were——"

"Is there?" persisted Hartley. "Zendra, your husband is asking you that question. If you know, answer me."

"There is a passage, built generations ago, that leads from my own lodgings——"

"Where?" flashed Jack.

"I do not know. I have never been through it. It may be closed now for all I know."

"We'll be up and doing," cried Jack, leaping up, his eyes blazing.

"You will try to leave me?" she cried, her lips trembling.

"Not by a jugful!" Hartley blurted, honestly. "If you can't get away I won't go, either."

"You would take me?" murmured Erma in Bob's ear.

"Take you?" snorted that suddenly eager young man.

"I'm just like Jack—I wouldn't go without!"

"Take us to this passage, Zendra, as quickly as you can," Jack urged. "We haven't any time to lose in our present business."

"Follow me," she cried, rising.

But Jack drew her arm through his and led the way at her side, Bob and Erma following.

"Walk slowly," whispered Jack. "Don't let anyone see any excitement."

They were soon in Zendra's own lodgings, which Jack had shared with her for that one happy month of wedded life.

"Zendra," whispered Jack, bringing her to him so that his lips were against her ear, "you have a few men here whom you can trust absolutely? They will obey without asking questions? Say, Tako, Manga, Tero and Bala?"

"I can trust them—yes, dear one. They would be torn to pieces before they would betray me."

"Then call them quietly. We shall need them. And give orders that we in here are not to be disturbed for two hours."

Quickly enough the four wondering male servitors came in.

"Zendra, tell these men to pack all the gold they can in baskets and pouches—all they can possibly carry!"

So the four men servitors gathered up all the gold they could carry.

"Now, the passage, Zendra!" throbbed Jack.

"It is under my couch, the door; it has always been there," whispered the princess.

In a jiffy they had the couch shifted.

The door opened, the passage lay before them.

Down a long flight of steps they went, Jack and Bob carrying lighted torches.

It was not rapid traveling down in that stuffy underground passage. So it was an hour ere they again stepped into the light in a cleft of rock well up on the hillside.

Yet on they toiled, until within less than half a mile of the beach.

"Gracious!" gasped Jack, as he turned for one look backward at the hill. "Hakka has missed us and guessed! Look at 'em!"

Out of the mouth of the pass spearmen were swarming by scores.

Now all of the eight fugitives made frantic haste. Jack did not want the burdens dropped, but even burdens seem light when one must carry them and yet escape pursuing death.

They reached the beach only a few hundred yards ahead of the foremost spearmen.

"Drop the bundles in—that's right," urged Jack as he darted up to one of the boats left behind by the pirates. "Now, girls, quickly! And you men, get in there! Bob, get an oar and shove off!"

Jack himself stood up in the boat.

Revolver drawn, he watched as Brewster got the little craft afloat, and a few yards from shore.

Then half a dozen of the best runners among the spearmen reached the beach.

Crack! Jack zipped the sand up just in front of their feet.

It was enough to make these spearmen hesitate.

Dropping down, Jack, too, seized an oar.

The floating boat swung around. They started on the dangerous, reef-infested three miles of water to the schooner.

As they looked back the fugitives saw more spearmen coming up, and with them the litters of Hakka and Kalo.

"They're coming off after us," Jack snorted, as he saw natives tumble thickly into the two boats left behind. "There's old Hakka coming along to boss the job!"

Our fugitives reached the trim little schooner some two hundred fathoms ahead of the foremost pursuing boat, in which sat old Hakka, stiff and gloomy.

"Tumble aboard lively, all of you," ordered Jack.

No sooner had he and Bob gotten their brides aboard than the two young Americans raced to one of the pair of six-pound guns that were in place on the deck.

In a jiffy the gun that covered the shore was loaded.

And now Hakka's rowers were bringing him slowly alongside.

"Come aboard, good Hakka," Jack invited. He even helped Hakka up over the side.

But in another twinkling Zendra's four faithful men

servitors had seized the priest. They bound him, despite his rage and cries, to the mainmast.

Then, smiling, our hero stepped to the six-pounder, sighted and fired. A shell struck and exploded on the beach, but not close enough to injure any of the hundreds of spearmen who stood there.

"As for you men in the boat," ordered Jack, looking down at Hakka's crew, "go back to your people. Tell them that we have Hakka and the princess. Tell the chiefs who are left that all night the gold must keep coming to this craft, and that not until we have got enough shall Zendra and Hakka be free to do as they wish. If the gold does not come, and freely, tell your chiefs that what happened just now on the beach will happen also in the valley, and that your towns will be destroyed."

The threat worked. All night and into the next morning boats continued to put off with treasure.

"We haven't any more than rightfully belongs to you, have we, dear one?" Jack whispered.

"All the gold belongs to the sovereign," Zendra whispered back. "So this is mine, and is not the fifteenth part of the gold that is stored on Wahitite."

So Hakka was sent safely ashore, and slowly sail was hoisted and the schooner stood westward for Southern Brazil.

Four days later the adventurers reached the mainland. From there the safe journey to New York, with millions in gold shipped, was merely a question of time.

No one has ever been able quite to figure where such young men as Jack Hartley and Bob Brewster acquired such wealth as they surely possess.

Nor can their best friends guess where they secured such charming young wives.

Erma is often supposed to be a Cuban. The four Wahititans, who still serve the young people faithfully, are believed to have come from somewhere in the West Indies.

But the best news of all for Jack and Bob is that their young wives now love life in the United States.

Incidentally, these charming girls from Wahitite have gained some new ideas about the value of gold.

THE END.

"THE BOY WHO BALKED; OR, BOB BRISBANE'S BIG KICK," is the title of a great story by Frank Irving. It will be published complete in No. 15 of "The Wide Awake Library," out next week. It is a rousing story that will appeal to every reader who has ever been in a place where he has simply had to make "a big kick." How Bob Brisbane made his kick is splendidly told. Don't miss the great number next week.

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